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Dungeons & Dragons

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Dungeon

ISSUE 119 | FEBRUARY 2005

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NEW COLUMNS BY WIL WHEATON AND MONTE COOK

ISSUE #119 FEBRUARY 2005 VOLUME 19, NO 2

DUNGEON

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SPECIAL FEATURE

GREYHAWK MAP INSERT

Our massive map of the World of Greyhawk continues with our second eight-panel poster. Track your party's progress through the world, from their lowly beginnings in Saltmarsh to their epic triumphs in the Vault of the Drow.

ADVENTURES

18 UNFAMILIAR GROUND
Chris West
Hezzrack the imp escaped a prison of stone only by entering a prison of words. His only chance now is for a helpful group of adventurers to rescue him from certain servitude as a goblin adept's familiar. A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters.

30 WRATH OF THE ABYSS
Greg A. Vaughan
Why have the drow returned to torment the beleagured city of Istivin? Can the shadowy menace that lurks in the city be destroyed? Find out in the exciting conclusion to the *Istivin: City of Shadows* campaign arc! A D&D adventure for 12th-level characters.

58 TOMB OF AKNAR RATALLA
Jack Flynn
For hundreds of years, Aknar Ratalla's tomb remained undisturbed, the *Black Blade* safely hiddin within its vaults. Can a band of adventurers use the tomb's guardians and traps to keep it that way? A D&D adventure for 14th-level characters.

ON THE COVER

Wayne Reynolds reminds us why drow are one of the coolest villains in D&D with this painting of Shahng, the exiled Weapons Master of notorious house Eilservs from "Wrath of the Abyss."

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"He screamed again and again, but whenever he did so the black paws tickled him with greater subtlety. Then he saw a sort of grey phosphorescence about, and guessed that they were coming even to that inner world of subterrene horror of which dim legends tell, and which is litten only by the pale death-fire wherewith reeks the ghoulish air and the primal mists of the pits at earth's core."

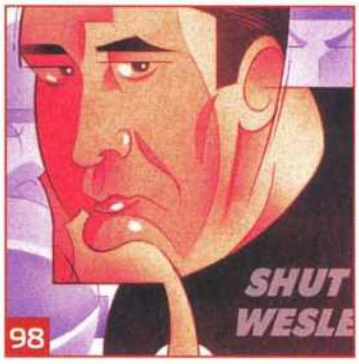
—H. P. Lovecraft
"The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath"

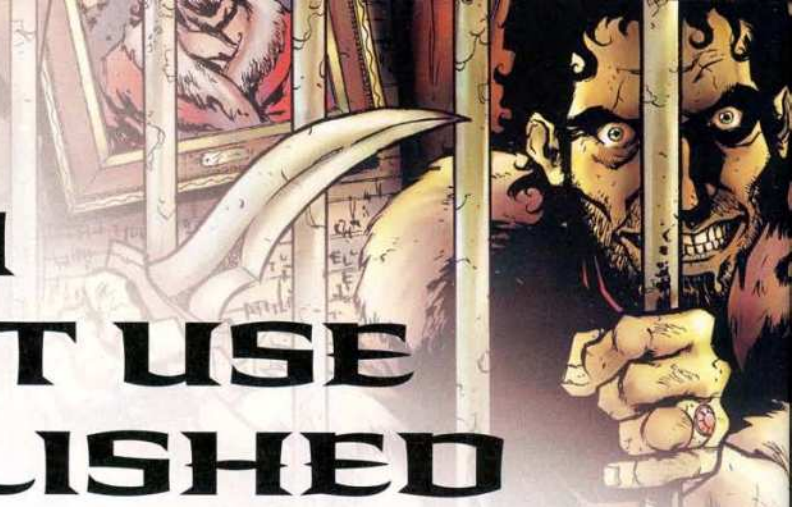
DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

RPGA NETWORK

Take advantage of the RPGA'S PLAYER REWARDS program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *DUNGEON*! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 3/31/05. Drop by www.rpga.com for more details, and use the following adventure codes:

Unfamiliar Ground (119UG1DN)
Wrath of the Abyss (119WA1DN)
Tomb of Aknar Ratalla (119TA1DN)





BUT I DON'T USE PUBLISHED ADVENTURES!

I love going to conventions. Ever since my first Twin Con in 1995, I've considered summer "Con Season." Since hitching my career to this crazy business, I've had a chance to look at conventions from the other side of the booth as a question answerer, part-time salesman, and quasi-celebrity. There's nothing quite like Gen Con booth duty when it comes to interacting with readers. I love it.

But not everyone I talk to while on booth duty is a subscriber or even a casual reader of the magazine. In those cases I often switch into sales mode. "Have you heard about the new DUNGEON magazine?" I ask. "Each issue now contains three complete official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventures!"

Frequently, they scrunch up their nose and say something like this: "But I don't use published adventures."

I don't use published adventures. To the editor-in-chief of DUNGEON, that phrase is like *power word stun*. Since "published adventures" make up a huge majority of what we publish here in DUNGEON, there isn't a whole lot I can say to someone who doesn't use them.

Or is there?

Usually, when a DM says that she doesn't use published adventures, she really means that she prefers to design her own adventures, often tailoring the party's exploits to the specific players in her group. Fair enough. I've been in that situation before. But it's worth considering that for a gaming product to be useful, you don't really need to use every single part of it. Sometimes, it's just a single element that sparks your imagination.

"More than a few speculated in private that the taint of war had brought a touch of the Abyss to Istivin." That throw-away line (written by yours truly) from the *LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer* was enough to spark Greg Vaughan's imagination, and this month he provides the final installment of the *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc that began in issue #117.

Greg took a single idea from a 192-page book and wove it into a three-installment mini-campaign. But he's not the first one. The original idea of an Abyssal entity haunting Istivin came from the backstory of the *Queen of the Spiders* supermodule. Published in 1986, that volume compiled classic adventures like *Hall of the Fire Giant King* and *Vault of the Drow*, adding a plot about Lolth drawing the city of Istivin into the Abyss as a framing device to get players interested in the epic quest in the first place.

When I revisited Istivin fourteen years later, I added the bit about something slipping through, using that element as a way to give the city character it had previously lacked. Greg did me one better with his series, which expands that idea to create several adventures we hope you will enjoy.

One element, from *Queen of the Spiders* to the *LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer* to the pages of this magazine. It's not just a trick for writers. DMs can use it, too.

The *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc as a whole might not appeal to you. But look at its parts, rather than its sum, and you may find something you like. Maybe it's a map. Maybe it's an NPC. Maybe it's just a single encounter.

The adventures in this magazine are first and foremost complete scenarios, but they are also collections of characters, situations, settings, tactics, and images that serve to spark the imagination.

We'd love it if everything we printed was useful right off the page, but we expect some of you are more discerning than that. We suspect, in fact, that some of you "don't use published adventures."

In the end, D&D is about imagination, and published adventures often serve to stoke that imagination and improve our games. Maybe we like one idea. Maybe we hate the whole thing and just know we could do it better. Either way, we're thinking, and our games are better off for it.

ERIK

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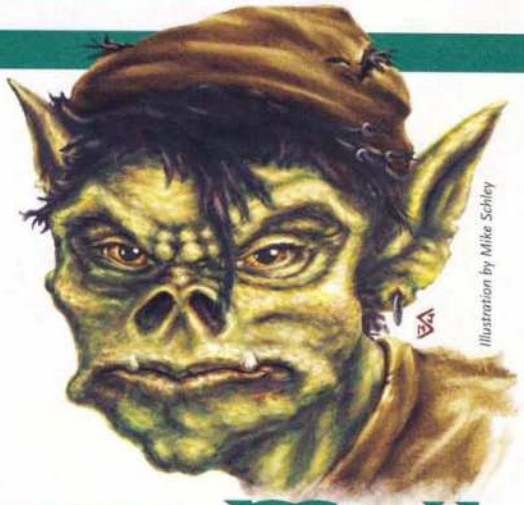


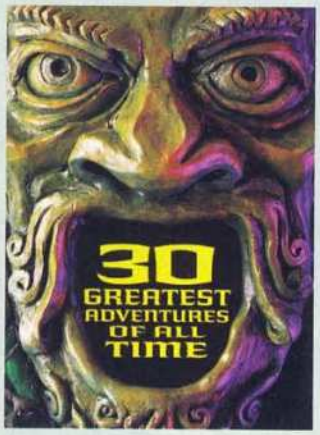
Illustration by Mike Schley

Prison Mail

Tell us what you think of this issue. Write to: Prison Mail, Paizo Publishing, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200 or send an email to dungeon@paizo.com.

Check out the *Dungeon* messageboards at paizo.com/dungeon

Dungeon #116



November's issue generated a ton of mail, thanks to a titanic "30 Greatest Adventures of All Time" article by a panel of judges including Ed Greenwood, Monte Cook, Christopher Perkins, and Bruce Cordell. While most readers agreed with the panel's honoring of *Queen of the Spiders*, *Ravenloft*, and *Tomb of Horrors*, many of you wrote in suggestions on overlooked adventures that should have made the list. A vibrant discussion of the list and the issue in general still rages on our always entertaining messageboards at paizo.com. Stop by and let us know what you thought of the list.

#116 also included "The Death of Lashimire," by Tim Hitchcock, our first psionic adventure in a good long while. Phil Larwood brought us "Palace of the Twisted King," a deliciously devious desert scenario featuring a surgery-obsessed meenlock monarch. Oh, and Christopher Perkins's "Asylum" ended the 11-adventure Shackled City Adventure Path with an explosive finale set on the foreboding prison plane of Carceri. Once again, the magazine is indebted to Chris Perkins, Chris Thomasson, and all the other great authors who helped make the Shackled City Adventure Path such a rip-roaring success. Keep your eyes on DUNGEON in 2005, when we'll present the next Adventure Path—The Age of Worms.

Back issues of DUNGEON #116 and dozens of other old issues, as well as more than 10,000 RPG products and accessories, are now available at paizo.com.

Apology Accepted

I just got my copy of DUNGEON and began reading. I usually read "Prison Mail" first, and as I went through it, I hit upon a letter that was one of the most whiny, adolescent bits of garbage I've ever seen.

Then I read my name at the bottom. I hate when that happens!

So, here we go:

I apologize to you, the folks at Paizo, and I apologize particularly to Mr. Wheaton!

Most of my reactions to the (at the time, proposed) changes to DUNGEON/DRAGON mags were way off base, particularly my raving lunacy against the single-page notes by Mr. Wil Wheaton.

The last couple of months of both mags have been great! I *will* be signing up again for both mags! Still, I don't agree with it all (4+ pages for D&D miniatures? Yak!), but I think the mags are greatly improved and continue to improve each month!

I've found at least one useful idea from each article I've read. Thanks for all the hard work! I'm really looking forward to next month's issues already!

Kevin Mathis
Via Email

Medication Time

Thanks for printing the "30 Greatest Adventures of All Time" article. It was a super nostalgia fix and affirmation for a proud collector of 29 of the listed adventures (*Dark Tower* has so far eluded me here Down Under). I suspect that most of the panel are 30-plus dungeonaholic dinosaurs like me (it takes one to know one), so I can almost forgive the obvious 1st Edition/Gygax bias. However (of course), I have some opinions. My major gripe would have to be the inclusion of the Basic Set adventures, particularly *Keep on the Borderlands*. I mean, really? I just don't see how you can put it above or even on the same list as epic, detailed, atmospheric works of genius like the "Return to" supermodules. Sure, everyone our age has played it, it's a classic, but only because there was nothing else to choose from! I mean, who would even think about running it today? Wouldn't you say standards have risen since then? "Who cares that no one in the Keep had a name?" I CARE! Perhaps it would have been wiser to compile a top 10 or 20 from each edition that would have compared apples to apples, not to fossilized apple cores. Now, the 1999 *Return to the Keep on the Borderlands* revision is another story. I would be much happier if that was on the list. Maybe the B1–9 supermodule would be a compromise to acknowledge the game's origin (what about *Rahasia*?).

A few minor gripes: don't try to tell me that 2nd Edition and the campaign worlds didn't sell that well or aren't that memorable! Perhaps you should have started by naming the list "Top 30 Generic Dungeons." Also, a bit of tokenism was in evidence. Why single out *Forge of Fury* and not the others in the series? Ditto *Dragons of Despair*, *Undermountain*, *Sinister Secret of Saltmarsh*, *Assassin's Knot*, and the RAVENLOFT campaign setting (much more than just one adventure or villain).

This Month in Dragon

Dragon #328

DRAGON gives you the best in gaming, presenting new official rules, original game content, great advice, and the perfect inspiration for your D&D game. In each issue, you'll also see what cool products are on the horizon, find out what other players are up to, and get an insider's look at the industry. Get more from your game: Get *DRAGON!*

Dwarves at War

by Mark Hart

Why do dwarves always carry the best armor possible and fight in small tactical units? Why are dwarves not afriad of spiders, orcs, and anything else that moves? Learn the ins and outs of dwarven warfare and learn how to fight like a dwarf yourself.

Paragons of the Kindred

by Anna Serfass

Four new prestige classes focused on the four most popular non-human gods. Elven, dwarven, halfling, and gnome clerics each are given a new option for them to persue, allowing them to become the paragons of their faith.

Nobody's Perfect

by Richard Pocklington

Now your fussy-eating, slow-healing elven mage can finally get the rewards he deserves from all of his drawbacks. This article provides a number of flaws for all the races to enjoy, allowing them to take advantage of all their disadvantages. Fat halflings and insomniac half-elves are now at your disposal.

Plus!

Winning Races: Saurian Shifters, The Ecology of the Will-O-Wisp, A Novel Approach: *Far Seer trilogy*, and of course, Class Acts, Bazaar of the Bizarre, Under Command, Silicon Sorcery, First Watch, Scale Mail, Sage Advice, and comics.

Some of my favorites (and surprising omissions): *Isle of the Ape*; *Dungeonland/Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*; the classic R series, later to become *Egg of the Phoenix*; *Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure* (ok, so you only just revised it, excellently by the way); the Bloodstone series; *Castle Greyhawk* (fun!); *Greyhawk Ruins*; the Lost Tombs trilogy; *Vecna Lives!*; *Die, Vecna, Die!*; *Return of the Eight*; *Return to White Plume Mountain*; *Dancing Hut of Baba Yaga*; the Avatar trilogy; *Nightmare Keep*; *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords*; *Night Below*; *Rod of Seven Parts*; *Labyrinth of Madness*; *A Paladin in Hell*; the Monstrous Arcana trilogies... I could go on and on (and I will, if you pay me). I have to confess to a Cordell/Cook bias. Most of my list would include everything that those two demigods have ever written.

I hope you and the judging panel feel sufficiently reprimanded. Now I need to go and take my pills and have a lie down (but I still love you all—hee hee hee).

Darren Tietz
Via Email

Thanks for the feedback, Darren! Looks like we should have asked you to round out the panel. A lot of your favorites almost made the list, but in the end we had to go with the consensus of the panel, and the panel loves them no-named NPCs from the world's favorite Keep. I suspect that the 40 Greatest D&D Adventures of All Time will include fewer adventures from the Stone Age of the hobby, but so long as the industry panel is stocked with folks who started playing in that era, nostalgic lists are bound to include modules that, while innovative in their time, probably wouldn't be as well received today.

On the other hand, I certainly hope future anniversaries will still look back with fondness on material like Queen of the Spiders, Expedition to the Barrier Peaks, *and* Ravenloft. *If not, well, I'll write the magazine an angry letter.*

No Love For Doc?

Ok, I understand that you're going to get a slew of people bitching about this or that module that should be included in the top 30, and I will probably agree that some of these arguments may even have merit.

Grins

Here's mine:

GOOD HEAVENS! How on earth could you leave *Egg of the Phoenix* out of your list?!?! This is one of the cleverest and most involving adventures in the history of the game, an adventure that nearly everyone who went through it still talks about.

True, it doesn't measure up to *Tomb of Horrors* or *Queen of the Spiders* (nice way to include seven modules into one listing, by the way!), but *Egg of the Phoenix* is one adventure that is *severely* underrated.

My #2 entry is *Saga of the Shadowlord*. Twists, turns, and a heck of a lot of adventuring from front to back, this adventure has it all.

#3 would be *Night's Dark Terror*, which was an adventure before its time and should have been set in AD&D.

Ah well, I know that not everything can make a list of "Greatest Ever," but these three adventures are the ones that deserved some credit as they were bloody clever.

Keep up the great work on *DUNGEON* and *DRAGON!*

Bryan Penney
Via Email

In fairness, the list probably doesn't contain enough Frank Mentzer adventures. While his opus, Temple of Elemental Evil *(with Gary Gygax) cracked the top five, other adventures hovered around 31–50, including your beloved* Egg of the Phoenix. *That superadventure, as well as Tracy Hickman's* Rahasia *(thanks for the letters, Hickman fans!) probably suffered in that both were initially available only in extremely limited runs only to members of the RPGA Network. Each enjoyed later editions, but by the time they came out again, the shine was off D&D adventures, and it was probably harder to outrank beloved modules like* Tomb of Horrors *and* Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan. *Had they released a bit earlier and to a wider audience, I suspect both would rank among the top 30 (according to our panel, at least).*

Enough Fluff, Thank You

I am worried about the increasing fluff content of *DUNGEON*. First it was the Maps of Mystery, then the comics, and now the magazine is loaded with non-adventure stuff.

I like how we have two *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* publications—*DRAGON* for the fluff, *DUNGEON* for adventures (and yes,

I don't subscribe to *DRAGON*). Why make them more similar to one another?

When I leaf through my older issues, the first adventure starts on page 8 or 10—now it is 18. The latest issue, #116, had 40 pages of adventure and 40 pages of fluff!

I have been reading *DUNGEON* for many years now, and this is the first time I have written. I have been following the entire Cauldron Campaign from issues #97–#116, and have wanted to run the entire campaign from start to finish. Unfortunately, I neglected to save every issue, and now I have gaps in the story. Will Wizards of the Coast and Paizo ever release a softcover campaign of it?

Also I have a request from my gaming group (8 people). Please include a level 22+ epic adventure. My players are screaming for something powerful and obscene, and I myself am lacking ideas. They have gotten tired of the charnel house of *Rappan Athuk*, and the assault of the Storm Lord, one of the first 20+ Adventures. I can only run them so many times before they get fed up with them.

Carey S. Scott
Via Email

P.S. Please update *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* for 3.5.

Issue #116 is an atypical example, since it included a very long article on the 30 Greatest D&D Adventures of All Time. As editor-in-chief of DUNGEON, *I had a chance to do something meaningful with D&D's 30th anniversary or simply let it slip by without fanfare. I chose to do something about it, and since* DUNGEON *is the place for adventures, I thought it would be fun to do an adventure-themed nostalgic issue. I don't anticipate more of this type of thing, at least not for five or ten years. The magazine contains more than just adventure content because, frankly, just adventure content doesn't sell well enough to keep the magazine in print.* DUNGEON *has to offer something else, so we've decided to position the magazine as a more general resource for Dungeon Masters, albeit with a strong emphasis on adventures.*

As to a compilation of Cauldron adventures, all I can say at present is that tons of readers have expressed interest, and we're working with Wizards of the Coast to find a way to make it happen.

Look for "The Quicksilver Hourglass," a new, extremely challenging epic-level scenario later this year.

Poor Whitefire!

Hmm, so you want to know your readers' favorite modules? My favorite *DUNGEON* adventures, eh? Issue #32's Side Trek, "Changeling," stands out in my mind (of course that was the first issue I'd ever seen/read, so it'll always be special to me). There's nothing like a fire-breathing "white" (albino red) dragon to throw PC expectations off balance. It was a shame he wasn't somewhat stronger hit-point-wise, or his cave more complex so that the PCs might have awakened him moving in. My PCs had prepped *silence*, *invisibility*, and *protection from cold* spells, and on a really lucky break—a roll of 09 against the dragon's sleeping chance—caught Whitefire asleep. The poor dragon was down to 1 hit point when he awoke and breathed on them, so I ruled that anyone that saved still took the full one point of damage (I'm still playing by "1st edition D&D" rules circa '84 with slight modifications adapted from AD&D), though I played up the comical side—the big fighter's eyebrows were burned off, leading to a great line from the movie *The Princess Bride*: "Singed a bit, were you?" And of course there was that disappointing hoard! "We risked our necks for this PITTANCE?!?!?! That dragon was huge! Come on, where the Hell's the treasure?!?!?"

"Elexa's Endeavor" (*DUNGEON* #53) was also excellent. It'll help me set my PCs up for a venture back to Castellan Keep to go *Against the Giants* and gives them a friend in court in Lord Harkon Justheart.

In addition, here are some others (in no particular order) I've thoroughly enjoyed reading and am looking forward to running:

"Castle of the Blind Sun" (*DUNGEON* #49), "The Fire Giant's Daughter" (which I'll tack onto *Against the Giants*) (*DUNGEON* #39), "The Wayward Wood" (*DUNGEON* #32), "Dark Days in Welldale" (I especially like the "druid") (*DUNGEON* #33), "The Lady Rose" (What a powerful ship! Perhaps it'll intercept my PCs' ship on their return from the Isle of Dread?) (*DUNGEON* #34), "The White Boar of Kilfay" (*DUNGEON* #37), "A Hot Day in L'Trel" (*DUNGEON* #44), "They Also Serve" (*DUNGEON* #10), "For a Lady's Honor" (*DUNGEON* #8), "Goblin Fever" (*DUNGEON* #46), "The Ulrich Monastery" (*DUNGEON* #39), "Wererats of Relfren" (*DUNGEON* #14), "Tulips of the Silver Moon" (*DUNGEON* #55), "Tortles of the Purple Sage" (*DUNGEON* #6 and #7), "The *Vaka's* Curse" (just the ship to start a trip to the Isle of Dread) (*DUNGEON* #50), "Rogue" (which I'm planning on setting on the Isle of Dread) (*DUNGEON* #34), "Isle of the Abbey" (again, where better to re-supply on the voyage to/from the Isle of Dread—my PCs are gonna hate me when they get home) (*DUNGEON* #34), "The Land of Men with Tails" (if they venture to other remote islands—or why not keep adding to their fun little expedition to Dread?) (*DUNGEON* #56), "Carcass Fracas" (*DUNGEON* #57), "Of Nests and Nations" (*DUNGEON* #13), "Out of the Ashes" (*DUNGEON* #18), "Old Embers Never Die" (*DUNGEON* #100), "Serpents of the Sands" (my first encounter with yuan-ti) (*DUNGEON* #37), "Unkindness of Ravens" (*DUNGEON* #65), "The Murder of Maury Miller" (*DUNGEON* #57), "Trouble with Mylvin Wimbly" (*DUNGEON* #5), "Courier Service" (*DUNGEON* #27), "Dovedale" (*DUNGEON* #46), "Them Apples" (*DUNGEON* #48), "Caveat Emptor" (a new reason to fear dentistry) (*DUNGEON* #58), "The Buzz in the Bridge" (*DUNGEON* #110), "Things that Go Bump in the Night" (*DUNGEON* #38), "Jigsaw" (*DUNGEON* #61), "Nbod's Room" (*DUNGEON* #51), "The Well of Lord Barcus" (*DUNGEON* #41), "Jacob's Well" (*DUNGEON* #43), "My Lady's Mirror" (*DUNGEON* #52), "Grave Circumstances" (which I'll save for my Gaz 7 "Northern Reaches" Trollheim expedition's final troll) (*DUNGEON* #56), "MonsterQuest" (*DUNGEON* #10), "Rank Amateurs" (*DUNGEON* #22), and that whole Seven Deadly Sins series that somehow has only had five installments thus far... and lest we forget our Shakespeare... "Spirits of the Tempest" (*DUNGEON* #52), "Dark Thane MacBeth" (*DUNGEON* #54), and "Lear, the Giant King" (*DUNGEON* #78) were all excellent adaptations from the Bard... and if anyone gets into any trouble there's always "Granite Mountain Prison" (*DUNGEON* #36) to keep them locked away awhile.

As for the old TSR stuff, check out the adventure "Lost Seneschal" from *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*, it's another I'm really looking forward to running. The whole story is

Next Month in Dungeon

Dungeon #120

The World of D&D Poster Map (3 of 4)

The third of four giant poster maps by all-star cartographer Robert Lazaretti reveals the sinister Scarlet Brotherhood, the vast reach of the corrupt Great Kingdom, and the location of D&D's most infamous location, the Tomb of Horrors. At last, *Dungeon* readers can chart our core D&D adventures on a world map fit for kings!

The Obsidian Eye
by Nicolas Logue and Brendan Victorson

The shifting sands have revealed an ancient obelisk from a forgotten age, an obsidian monolith whose presence is having an unsettling effect on the surrounding desert. Ancient dead arise from the dunes, dangerous jackalweres launch attacks on caravans and villages, and the mysterious Order of the Obsidian Eye has flocked to the unearthed ruin for reasons no doubt dire. What monstrous portents do these events foretell? A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters.

The Forsaken Arch
by Timothy J. Haener

The pearl divers of Shoalbury are in trouble. A band of birdlike kenku and ogres have been ambushing and plundering outgoing shipments of pearls, and the villagers are growing desperate. And why are the bandits stealing eyes from the bodies of their victims? A single guard survived the most recent ambush with one eye intact, and his testimony may just be enough to lead a brave band of adventurers to the bandit lair, and to the sinister cult they serve. A D&D adventure for 7th-level characters.

Lost Temple of Demogorgon
by Sean K Reynolds

His name has inspired fear in legions of heroes, and his cult has lurked in the dismal reaches of the world for countless ages. His minions are savage and feral, his worshipers vile and wretched. He is Demogorgon, and his temples are nightmare realms haunted by primeval menaces and hateful legacies from a time when the world was savage. And now, a vengeful death knight has discovered one of these lost temples—will the PCs aid him in his dark quest for revenge, or will they fall before the awakened host of the Prince of Demons? A D&D adventure for 14th-level characters.

wonderful, from the highwaymen robbing the PCs to their joust with Cait Milisleet and the Land of the Famished Giant. And also B10: *Night's Dark Terror* (though I have to find a group of PCs who aren't from Threshold to run it) is gonna be fun as three separate tribes of goblins storm the village.

My best group of PC's toughest encounter so far was with the living statue in Elwyn's Sanctuary from B1–9: *In Search of Adventure* on their first time out. They stumbled into Elwyn's fortress and got caught in the trap (a big stone door closed behind them, locking them in), so I had the thieves decide which of them would (another movie line, from *Soldier* this time) "Walk point, take the first hit." I let my favorite character take the lead and it almost cost her her life. Nothing like walking into a room and having the statuary spring to life and attack you when you aren't expecting it! She managed to deliver the blow that finished it before it finished her and she's been the leader of that party ever since.

William T. Dougherty
Via Email

Finding Love Online

I just wanted to write in to let you know that I *love* the online supplements provided for *Dungeon*. I've been hoping you'd make that a regular feature ever since you provided the online supplement for "Life's Bazaar." My players have been amazed when I hand them such high-quality handouts and I don't have to use a color copier! This is definitely a step in the right direction and it's one of several things that made me decide to renew my subscription for another three years. Keep up the great work!

Theo Judd
College Station, TX

Burnt Umber (Hulk?)

I thought Monte Cook's "All These Wonderful Toys" in issue #116 made some solid suggestions on how a DM can prepare for miniature combat.

But one inexpensive toy—a box of crayons—got overlooked.

Rather than deal with the mess of wet-erase markers on battle maps, our group has come to rely on plain old paper battle maps on which the DM has depicted various features in crayon beforehand.

With our computer, we print out the number of sheets we need. (Several d20 publishers offer one-inch grid sheets as free pdf downloads.)

Then, with tape or a glue stick, we piece together the sheets to make the map large enough for your encounter.

Lastly, draw in the map, coloring in all the important features. This gives a better sense of the terrain than the beige of the vinyl battle map.

As a bonus, crayon-drawn maps never smear like prepped marker-drawn vinyl battle maps do. And if the maps suffer snack and drink damage in the course of the game, they're easily disposed of afterward.

For encounters such as the wharf chase in "Mad God's Key" (issue #114) or the canyon run in "Racing the Snake" (issue #105), where the terrain was essential to the combat, having the map's details done in crayon helped the DM and PCs alike envision the various landscapes.

Yes, it takes some extra effort to redraw a *Dungeon* map this way. But for our group, it's always been worth it.

Troy E. Taylor
Granville, IL

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH DUNGEON

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THE WORLD OF GREYHAWK
LEGEND

Unfamiliar Ground

BY CHRISTOPHER WEST
ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRED HOOPER AND JOACHIM BARRUM
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

Any Setting • Low-level (1–5) • Dungeon Crawl

Although the necromancer died centuries ago and his tower has long since crumbled into forgotten ruin, a tiny portion of his legacy lives on. Sure, that life might be filled with mean voices that no one else can hear, humiliating games of chess against mindless skeletons, and demeaning tasks set by a goblin mistress, but for Hezzrack the imp, it's better than nothing. At least, until he can trick some handy adventurers into doing a little goblin-smashing.

"Unfamiliar Ground" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 3rd-level PCs. It takes place in any isolated wilderness area through which PCs might travel, and can easily be dropped into an existing campaign.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, a wicked necromancer terrorized the lands surrounding his tower stronghold with a growing legion of undead minions. He drove off most of the region's inhabitants, and attracted the attention of several mighty heroes who eventually battled their way through his evil forces and brought the wizard's tower down around him.

At this time, the wizard had bound an imp named Hezzrack to his service as a familiar. During the final conflict, the wizard sent Hezzrack on an urgent errand to the deepest vaults of the tower to fetch his last skeletal minions for the stronghold's defense. Time ran out before Hezzrack could complete his task, however, and the collapse of the wizard's tower buried the imp's only escape route under tons of rock and debris. Hezzrack found himself entombed with only a handful of skeletal undead for company.

The imp passed the next several centuries playing chess with himself and setting up macabre theatrical performances for his own amusement, using the mindless skeletons as players. He also spent time studying magic from his old master's spellbook, but lack of experience, spell components, and genuine talent limited his progress. He was able to scry upon the surrounding countryside using a magical pool in the vault, but as the years wore on, Hezzrack's mind grew increasingly unstable. The pool allowed him to telepathically contact nearby travelers, but all of his attempts to do so only fed into an old legend that the area was "haunted." As a result of these stories more and

more people avoided the old tower. On numerous occasions Hezzrack tried to kill himself, thinking that a century of banishment back to the Nine Hells would be preferable to an eternity of boredom... but each of his attempts failed, due to either cowardice or incompetence. With each failure, the little devil lost an additional shred of sanity and became more desperate to escape in other ways.

Hezzrack finally managed to use the magical pool to contact a creature that agreed to help: a female goblin leader by the name of Neegla. This goblin adept and her followers had recently split away from their old tribe and moved into the area to set up a lair in the very same hill that once supported the wizard's tower. She was willing to unearth the imp, but only if the creature would agree to serve the goblin unconditionally for one year once she released him from his prison. Desperate for any way out, Hezzrack quickly accepted.

Once freed, the imp found himself in a new prison: serving a master vastly inferior to anything he had ever been associated with. Worse, he learned that Neegla was making plans to try to bind him as her own familiar as soon as she could uncover the necessary magical secrets!

Unable to leave her, harm her, or even set his skeletons against her due to the terms of his agreement, Hezzrack began to look for a sneakier way out of the situation. Whenever Neegla holes up to rest for the day, the imp flies off in search of someone—anyone—who might be persuaded to slay the goblins and set him free once and for all.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs are traveling through an isolated stretch of countryside when a chance encounter with a desperate imp sends them on an unexpected diversion into a goblin den. There they encounter the goblin band, unwittingly set the tiny devil free from its servitude, and discover an ancient underground vault lost for centuries and guarded by skeletal warriors. The magical secrets within this vault explain much, but before they can escape with their newly-found treasure the PCs must fight for their lives against one more undead guardian: a terrifying skeletal dragon many times their size!

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins when the imp Hezzrack, who seeks to manipulate the PCs into assaulting a goblin den in the nearby forest, interrupts their journey. He observes the party for a short while before choosing one of the following tactics best suited to their apparent disposition.

- If any of the PCs openly carry important-looking small objects, documents, or a bit of precious jewelry, the devil *polymorphs* into raven form and attempts to snatch the item away. If successful, he flies into the forest, perches just out of reach of any ranged weapons the characters might be carrying, and waits for them to pursue him before leading them ever closer to the goblin caves. You can tie this theft to an ongoing adventure. For example, if the heroes are tasked with delivering an important letter or possess a map or document that they must have to achieve their goals, those items make perfect targets for the imp. If necessary, the imp may even track them throughout the day and into the night looking for a better opportunity to take something of significance when they set up camp.

- If the PCs look desperate for a good meal, Hezzrack assumes boar shape, charges right through the party, and tries to lead the hungry PCs on a merry chase through the forest... right into the goblins' den.

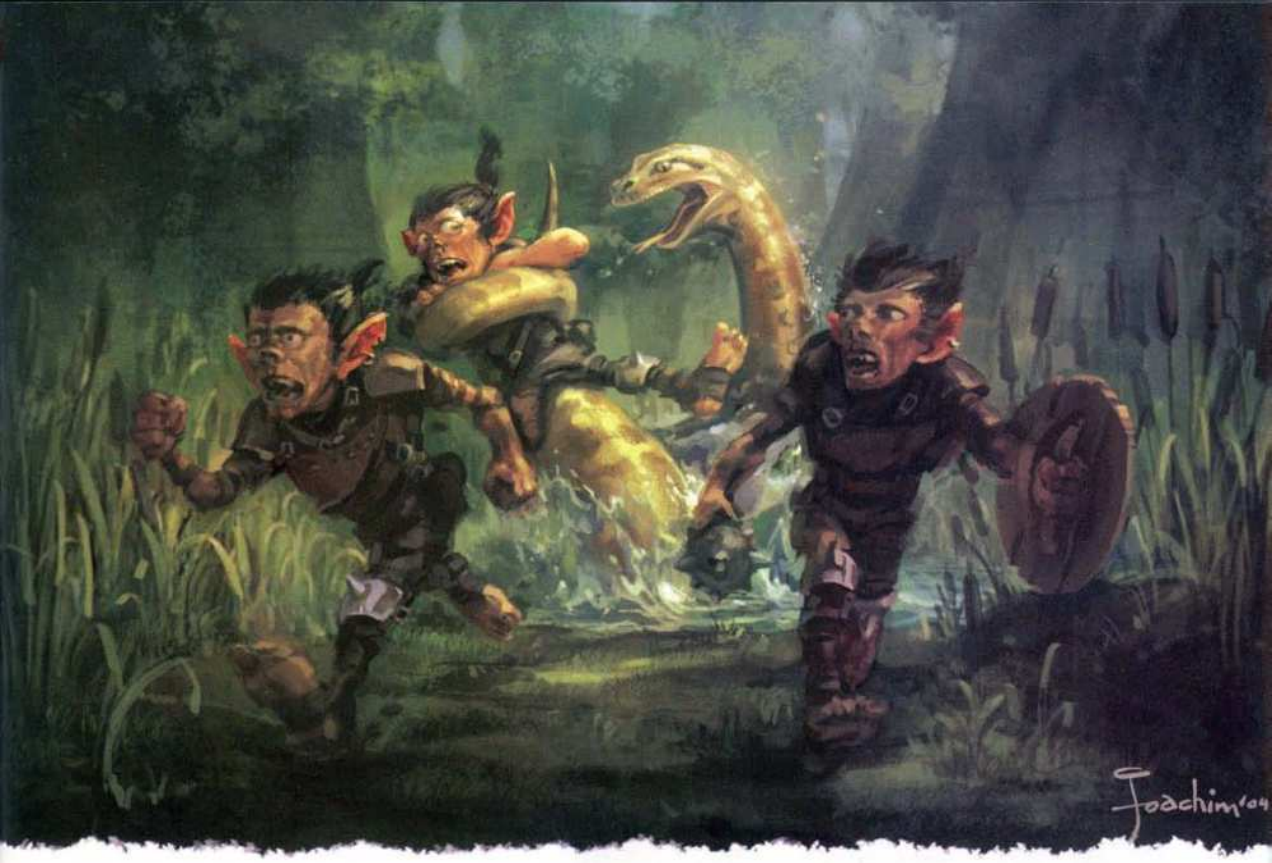
- If the PCs have a mercenary bent, the imp appears before them and promises to lead them to a great treasure in exchange for their aid in eliminating the goblins. If pressed for details, he tells them of the scrying pool and tries to make the other treasures in the caves sound greatly appealing... including Neegla's magic weapon and a spellbook belonging to his old master.

- If nothing else works, or if the party appears honorable to a fault, the Imp simply begs them for their help directly. He'll even go so far as to claim to be a reformed little devil who "only wants to live free and do good things to people."

If you feel that the imp's tricks may not be a sufficient hook for your players, consider an alternate way to set the stage for this adventure. The characters could be hired to search for some missing travelers while visiting a nearby town, or perhaps a priest asks them to investigate the ruins of the old wizard's tower to make sure evil is not growing in the area once again. The wizard's tower itself lies as an unremarkable heap of moss-covered stones, long abandoned (unless the DM wishes to use it to expand this adventure). The remains of the travelers can be found in area **10**.

GOBLINS AND IMPS

The goblin lair is a small tunnel network dug into a cliff that lies near the north end of a small woodland lake. A moderately well traveled road runs along the south side of the lake. Unless the party chooses to traverse the lake itself via boat or by swimming, the PCs may approach the cave using one of two paths. The first is a narrow ledge that runs along the western end of the lake near the base of a steep, 50-foot-tall cliff, which follows the contour of the lake around to the north side. It provides very little cover for a stealthy approach, but is a much more direct route. The longer path, circumnavigating the lake to the east, offers plenty of trees and thick underbrush in which to hide but takes three times as long to traverse. Characters approaching the cave from the east stand a better chance of going unnoticed by the goblin lookout in area **3**. Unfortunately, if they take this route the chances of encountering the lake's denizen are increased. The lake is fed at the bottom by an underground stream that connects to area **9** of the goblin caves. A Medium or smaller creature able to swim 120 feet underwater against a strong current could, theoretically, use this natural channel to reach the caves without being detected by the goblins.



THE LAKE MONSTER (EL 2)

Creature: The lake itself is home to an unusually aggressive constrictor snake, which makes its presence known by swiftly attacking a few minutes after a PC sets foot in the water. If the PCs travel the forested path along the lake's eastern shore, there's a 50% chance the snake notices them and attacks. At the DM's discretion, it might also attack creatures walking the path to the west.

Constrictor Snake: hp 19; *Monster Manual* 279.

Tactics: The snake typically lies in wait near the eastern shore. If a character elects to swim out into the lake, the creature attacks as the character crosses the deeper waters near the middle. It prefers Small prey, and won't attack anything bigger than Large size.

THE GOBLIN CAVES

This dank and filthy tunnel complex is currently home to a band of goblins led by a goblin adept named Neegla. This group recently split from a larger tribe over gender issues, and doesn't yet include any children. The females of the new tribe are all combatants, equal to the males. The group planned to use these caves as a staging area for raids against travelers, but so far has had little luck. A total of twelve goblins live here, not including their leader.

Unless otherwise noted, all passageways and chambers within the goblin caves are 7 feet high and lined with packed earth. Walls are of a similar construction; the caves were dug out of the cliff by a variety of burrowing creatures over many years. No light sources exist unless specifically mentioned in the text.

1. CAVE ENTRANCE

Receding into the base of the cliff wall at this point is a dark earthen tunnel with piles of rocks and dirt strewn about the opening. Along the cliff face to the east of this entrance and approximately ten feet up from the ground, a second opening is plainly visible atop a small ledge. The shore of a small lake lies roughly thirty-five feet from the cave entrance.

Depending on how stealthily the PCs have approached this area, there may or may not be a goblin lookout sitting in the shadows of the upper cave opening near the ledge. See area **3** for details.

2. GUARD CHAMBER (EL 2)

This large chamber is approximately twelve feet high. The passage narrows again and continues to the north after passing between two more low piles of rocks. To the east, a roughly carved stairway ascends into darkness behind one of the rock piles while a slab of stone and four small boulders appear to serve as a makeshift table and chairs in the southwest corner. A number of tiny painted bones are scattered on top of the table.

Creatures: The goblins use this room as a guard chamber, and although four can usually be found here, they tend to do less guarding and more entertaining, playing games of chance with the set of bones on the stone table and shirking their actual duty. They rely

on the lookout in area **3** to warn them of trouble before it arrives.

Goblins (4): hp 5; *Monster Manual* 133.

Development: If alerted to the party's approach by the lookout in area **3**, one of these goblins runs into the complex to warn the rest of the band, returning with 1d4+2 goblin reinforcements in 6 rounds. The others take up positions behind the rock piles and ready their javelins to attack any invaders from cover.

While Neegla doesn't immediately send her entire force to this room (she has seen too many false alarms in recent weeks to be easily convinced of danger), she does take the remainder of the tribe and join the defense if the first wave of reinforcements fails to return within a few minutes. Depending on the situation she finds when she arrives, the goblin leader orders more javelin-throwers to stand ready behind the rock piles or directs melee troops into flanking positions.

The goblins won't make this battle a last stand. If half of their number fall during the opening exchange, the rest flee deeper into the tunnels while Neegla uses her *summon monster I* scroll to delay pursuit. The band's first stop is area **4**, where they try to lure the PCs into the trap with taunts and thrown javelins. If that fails to stop the invaders, the goblins rally in area **5** and set up a new defense behind the first curtain. From here they fight until half of their remaining number have fallen or fled, and then the rest assume an "every-goblin-for-himself" mentality and scatter into random tunnels. Neegla flees from this battle to the fountain chamber (area **13**) where she hopes to find her missing imp and make him carry on the fight for her.

If Neegla is brought down at any point during the above procedure, the goblins' tactics immediately become much less sophisticated: individuals fight if cornered, but otherwise the goblins try to escape the caves with their own hides intact.

3. LOOKOUT POST (EL 1/3)

The ceiling in this area droops to a height of five feet before the cave opens onto a southwest-facing ledge in the cliff overlooking the main entrance. This shelf provides an excellent view of the nearby lake and the trail along its western side. An uneven stairway descends from the back of this chamber toward the lower passages to the west.

Creature: A single goblin is always posted here to watch for trouble approaching the cave. Neegla usually hands out this task as a punishment to those who displease her. She typically sends another goblin up every couple hours, not to replace the lookout, but simply to make sure he hasn't fallen asleep. Sleeping lookouts are awakened with a sharp kick to a sensitive place.

Goblin: hp 5; *Monster Manual* 133.

Development: If the goblin sees the PCs approaching area **1** (automatic if the PCs use the western ledge around the lake, or if he makes his Spot check against their Hide checks if they take the eastern route), he scrambles down the steps to area **2** and alerts the guards there before running deeper into the cave to alert the rest of the tribe.

4. TRAPPED PASSAGE (EL 2)

The tunnel winds gradually down a handful of roughly hewn stairs before widening into a level area and continuing on to the north. The floor here is matted with straw and dried grass, and the earthy ceiling rises to twelve feet.

Trap: The straw lining the floor of this area is a crude attempt to conceal a 10-foot-deep pit.

Rock-Lined Camouflaged Pit Trap: CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 feet deep (1d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-ft. squares); sharp rocks (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 sharp rocks per target for 1d4 each); Search DC 18; Disable Device DC 15.

5. LIVING CHAMBER (EL 3)

A narrow fissure in this cavern's fifteen-foot-tall stone ceiling allows the smoke from a large fire pit in the center of this chamber to vent, but the cloying stench of unwashed bodies and unfinished meat lingers nevertheless. Niches carved into the rock walls are lined with dirty rags and uncured furs, while two more animal skins hang as curtains over passages to the south and southwest. To the east, another tunnel leads down a flight of earthen stairs. A fourth passage heads off to the northwest.

Creatures: At any given time, at least seven goblins can be found lying around this chamber, gnawing on bones and scuffling with one another over petty irritations while the remainder of the band performs guard duty at the entrance to the caves.

Goblins (7): hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 133.

6. NEEGLA'S CHAMBER (CR 2)

A set of widely spaced steps winds up into this room. A heap of fine furs lies in the northeast corner, while the southwest end prominently displays a skull-adorned altar of bloodstained stone bearing a wicked-looking knife and copper chalice. Aside from the bloody altar, the chamber itself actually seems surprisingly tidy. A crimson rug covering much of the floor appears to have been cleaned recently and the furs are arranged in an orderly fashion.

Creature: The goblin tribal leader, Neegla, sleeps here by day, sometimes accompanied by one or two favored goblins of the tribe. The specific goblins who meet her favor change with alarming frequency. A goblin might share her quarters one day and end up pulling lookout duty the next. Neegla is uncharacteristically obsessed with neatness and order. Though she has given up on forcing her followers to share this trait, she still keeps herself and her private quarters as clean as possible and tries to avoid filth in general. Neegla keeps her unusually powerful weapon near to hand at all times, knowing that possession of the weapon helps to ensure her leadership of the band. She is quite paranoid that one of her followers might try to steal the weapon and use it to challenge her authority.

Neegla, female goblin warrior 3/adept 1: CR 2; Small humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 1d6+1; hp 21; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +0; Atk or Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+2 plus 1d6 cold/×4, *+1 lesser frost heavy*

NEEGLA

pick) or +6 ranged (1d6/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +5, Intimidate +9, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Ride +5, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Intimidate).

Languages: Common, Goblin.

Adept Spells Prepared (caster level 1): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 11), *touch of fatigue* (+5 melee touch, DC 11); 1st—*cure light wounds, obscuring mist.*

Possessions: Leather armor, light wooden shield, *+1 lesser frost heavy pick* (command word "frozendoom," 15 charges), masterwork light crossbow, 20 bolts, scroll of *summon monster I* (caster level 3).

Treasure: Hidden in the furs that make up Neegla's bed is a thunderstone, which slipped out of a pocket while she slept. She hasn't yet realized that it is missing and might find out the hard way if she needs to use it during her encounter with the PCs.

The wicked-looking knife on the altar is an unusual design made of jagged steel and worth 45 gp to a collector. Neegla stole it from the chieftain of her old tribe before setting out on her own. The copper chalice is worth 5 gp.

The altar itself actually has outward-swinging cabinet doors that are disguised as a bas-relief carving of the goblin deity Maglubiyet. A successful DC 15 Search check discovers the hidden compartment. Within are two shelves containing a set of books, carefully arranged in order from largest to smallest. The tomes all relate to the summoning of familiars and binding of extraplanar creatures. One book, with pages marked with strips of dried meat, is entitled "The Practical Wizard's Guide to Making Friends: How to Bind Familiars Against Their Will." The collection is worth a total of 300 gp. Also on the shelves are three neatly labeled *potions of cure light wounds* and a black leather pouch containing 35 gp.

7. STORAGE AREA

This forked passage appears to be used for the storage of goods and supplies. An assortment of crates and barrels hugs the walls: some of them standing open and empty, others stacked neatly. The main passage seems to continue at a level grade to the northeast, while another branch snakes downward along a set of roughly carved stairs to the west.

A successful Listen check (DC 10) allows a PC to detect the faint rumble of cascading water from depths of the western passage.

Treasure: The goblins use four barrels and eight crates to store loot stolen during raids on passing merchants and travelers. They contain: a masterwork lyre worth 100 gp, a 5-gallon keg of fine ale worth 10 gp, a bottle of fine elven wine valued at 45 gp, and a set of bloodstained masterwork manacles (which are locked and missing their key).

8. STAIRWAY PASSAGE

As this tunnel proceeds deeper into the ground, the packed soil floor gradually gives way to shale rock steps and the air and walls become noticeably moist. The faint but unmistakable sound of falling water echoes up from the darkness below.

The damp rocks near the lower end of the passage are slippery enough that a careless step could send a character plummeting down into the watery cave. PCs descending the stairway must make a successful Balance check (DC 13). Failure by 5 or more results in a fall and slide the rest of the way down to area **9**. This tumble inflicts 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. A subsequent Reflex saving throw (DC 15) allows a falling character to recover at the base of the stairs; otherwise the trip ends with a 10-foot fall into the water below for an additional 1d6 points of nonlethal damage.

9. WATERFALL CAVERN

The constant thunder of a ten-foot waterfall at the northwestern end of this humid cavern fills this chamber with sound. A ledge of weathered shale along the eastern side overlooks a deep-looking subterranean pool. A steady inflow of water from a narrow fissure feeds the cascade and the pool, but no exit channel for the pool is visible. The only other entrance appears to be a natural staircase of rock that climbs away to the north.

The water filling this cave flows out through a channel at the bottom of the pool (marked with an "X" on the map). Although the pool is only 20 feet deep, the current near the underwater outflow is fairly strong. Any PC who approaches the deepest part of the pool (a depth of 20 feet) risks being pulled into the channel. A successful Swim check (DC 15) avoids this fate. Medium or smaller PCs caught in the current are carried 120 feet downstream at a speed of 60 feet per round before emerging at the bottom of the lake outside the goblin caves. A larger creature or object that

Lesser Weapon Qualities

Often built by item crafters working with a limited budget, lesser weapon qualities function exactly like their normal cousins, except their superior magical benefits are linked to a certain number of charges like wands. Each time a lesser weapon quality is used, a charge is automatically expended. A lesser weapon quality only consumes one charge per round, so creatures with multiple weapon attacks can gain more use from a lesser magic weapon as a result. When all charges are depleted, the weapon becomes a nonmagical masterwork weapon.

Because their benefit is limited, lesser magic weapons cost half as much as regular magic weapons with the same abilities. A partially charged lesser magic weapon's cost is reduced in the same manner as a partially charged wand. The cost of the masterwork weapon's base price is not affected by this adjustment. These costs are totaled on the following table.

Effective Weapon Bonus	Base Price (Fully Charged)	Price per Charge
+1	1,000 gp	20 gp
+2	4,000 gp	80 gp
+3	9,000 gp	180 gp
+4	16,000 gp	320 gp
+5	25,000 gp	500 gp
+6	36,000 gp	720 gp
+7	49,000 gp	980 gp
+8	64,000 gp	1,280 gp
+9	81,000 gp	1,620 gp
+10	100,000 gp	2,000 gp

gets trapped by the current won't fit through the channel, and instead plugs the only outlet for the pool. (Strength check, DC 28, to become free.) If the outlet remains obstructed (either by a PC or some large piece of debris, such as a boulder) the cave begins filling with water. Within a few hours, the water level climbs as high as area 7; within a day, the entire complex could be flooded and uninhabitable.

Treasure: Pinned under a collapsed piece of the rock ledge in the shallow southeast end of the pool are the remains of a goblin who fell to his death fetching water for the tribe a few days previous. A tattered leather neck-purse still contains 6 gp and a watertight vial of *silversheen*.

10. REFUSE PIT

A mix of wretched and nauseating odors rises from a gaping ten-foot-wide and fifteen-foot-deep pit dug into the floor of this area. At the bottom, a greenish muck of decomposing waste contains what appears to be a mix of bones, entrails, and other unidentifiable debris. Two earthen stairways wind up and toward the west from the north and south ends of the chamber.

The goblins use this pit to dump their garbage and anything else they want to be rid of. Buried at the bottom of the mess are the remains of a goblin who challenged Neegla's leadership shortly after they settled in this cave. Nearer to the surface are the gnawed remains of two travelers who were ambushed by the goblins; a broken copper brooch with the inscription "Goodspeed, fair Aylssyn." lies with them.

Any injured character coming in contact with the pit's contents risks a serious case of filth fever (Fortitude DC 12; Incubation 1d3 days; Damage 1d3 Dex, 1d3 Con).

Treasure: Most of the goblin's valuables were stripped from his corpse before it was dumped here, but a tiny silvered dagger tucked into his garments can still be found, if any PC has the nerve to look (Search DC 15). It's worth 22 gp when cleaned off.

11. RUBBLE-STREWN PASSAGE

Piles of rubble and chunks of masonry choke this low passage, which has the look of a fresh excavation. A very dim flickering light filters into this area from a gap in the north wall. The area beyond appears to be fashioned of carved stone. From this point the debris-filled passage follows a crude earthen stairway down to the southeast and along a level grade back to the southwest.

The tunnel at this point is only 5 feet high. At Neegla's orders (who in turn was following the telepathic instructions of the imp Hezzrack), the goblins dug this area out, but most of them are too afraid of the skeletons within to enter the rooms beyond.

12. ANCIENT CRYPT (EL 3)

This cold stone chamber is faintly illuminated by flickering torchlight passing through the open doors to the north. Six ancient sarcophagi rest here, their lids unsealed and perched precariously atop the tombs. Armored skeletal forms can be dimly seen within each one.

Creatures: The skeletons are all animated, and are under orders to rise up and attack anyone other than Hezzrack or Neegla who enters the chamber. Each of the skeletons wears an ancient suit of banded mail, carries a heavy steel shield, and wields a scimitar. If the PCs have already routed the goblin tribe and sent them scattering through the caves, one goblin corpse might be found on the floor of this crypt, a victim of the chamber's guardians who foolishly tried to flee through the crypt in his panic.

Armored Human Warrior Skeletons (6): hp 6; Spd 20 ft., AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; *Monster Manual* 225.

Treasure: One of the skeletons has a black onyx gem worth 35 gp lodged inside its skull, which can only be removed by breaking open the skull. The rattling coming from its skull as it fights should tip the PCs off to the prize within.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Since these skeletons are more heavily armored than normal skeletons, grant awards to the PCs as if they were CR 1/2 creatures.

13. FOUNTAIN CHAMBER (EL 4)

This large chamber is softly illuminated by three flickering torches mounted in sconces in the three intact corners of the room. It appears that the chamber was once a symmetrical octagon-shaped space, but much of the northwestern corner has collapsed into rubble. Along each of the main walls to the north, south, and east, short flights of stairs ascend to a set of double doors carved out of the same bluish stone that makes up the rest of the chamber. The western staircase is only partly visible at its southern end, and leads up to a narrow gap in the rubble with a shadowy space beyond. The doorway to the south stands open, but the doors to the north and east are shut, their faces pitted and scarred with cracks and chips. Dominating the center of the room is a serene twenty-foot-diameter pool of clear liquid. The water seems to reflect and amplify the flickering torchlight, casting an ever-shifting pattern of luminescence on the vaulted ceiling thirty feet above.

The northern doorway once led into the main basement area of the ancient tower, and symbolized the imp's only perceived exit. Indications of the abuses that have been leveled at it include acid and other chemical stains, claw marks, scratches, chipped spots, scorch marks, and superficial stress fractures. Despite all of this, the doors show no sign of giving way.

The doorway to the east is both locked (Open Lock DC 25) and trapped (see Trap, below). Hezzrack keeps the key—which also bypasses the trap—tucked away in his den (area **14**).

The pool in the center of the room is 10 feet deep. It is also where the primary menace in the room hides.

Creature: The pool is the lair of a skeletal green dragon. The dragon lurks in the pool, and lunges out to attack anyone who peers into it. Although the dragon

is large and menacing, it's in poor condition. In addition to many obvious prior injuries to the monster's body, it is completely missing one of its forelimbs and its tail. The beast's remaining claws and teeth are also past their prime, having been dulled by centuries of futile scratching at the chamber's impenetrable northern door.

Snapper, battered skeletal young adult green dragon: CR 4; Large undead; HD 17d12+17; hp 127 (48 remaining); Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +17; Grp +27; Atk +22 melee (1d8+6, bite); Full Atk +22 melee (1d8+6, bite) and +17 melee (1d6+3, claw) and +17 melee (1d4+3 bludgeoning, 2 wings); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with bite); SA frightful presence (150-ft. range, DC 20 Will save); SQ darkvision 120 ft., damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, immunity to acid, immunity to cold, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 23, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 14; *Draconomicon* 192.

Feats: Improved Initiative[B].

Note: A skeletal young adult green dragon is normally a CR 5 monster, but this one is only a CR 4 monster due to its weakened condition.

Tactics: Snapper does not pursue characters who flee from area **13**. Nor does the dragon coordinate its attacks on one target; it flails about in combat, splitting its attacks evenly amongst all possible targets.

Trap: Anyone who tries to open the door to area **15** triggers one of the wizard's ancient traps.

***Burning Hands* Trap**: CR 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*burning hands*, 12th-level wizard, 5d4 fire, DC 11 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 26, Disable Device DC 26.

Treasure: The three sconce-mounted torches are everburning torches worth 110 gp each. (A fourth is buried beneath the mountain of debris filling the northwest corner.) Beyond that, the only item of value to be found here is the magical scrying pool itself, which is built into the floor of the chamber and can't be removed. A character peering into the water is able to spy upon the surrounding countryside to a range of 5 miles as if affected by a *greater scrying* spell cast by a 15th-level wizard. The exception is that the viewer need not target and follow an individual; any location within range may be viewed instead, and the magical sensor created by this viewing can be maneuvered at a fly speed of 50 ft. (perfect) or relocated at will. Additionally, water from this pool acts as a potion of *clairaudience/clairvoyance* (caster level 15) if consumed, though this magical quality fades an hour after water is removed from the pool.

The scrying pool could be a great asset to PCs who wish to set up a base in the

region, but its limited range makes the pool useless for divinations beyond the immediate vicinity.

14. HEZZRACK'S DEN (EL 3)

This room was nearly sealed off by the collapse that filled the northwest section of the outer chamber—a five-foot gap at the top of a short and mostly-buried set of stairs allows the only access now. Inside, the rocks and masonry are completely covered with countless unintelligible markings and doodles that appear to be scratched directly into the stone surface by tiny claws.

The markings on this chamber's walls are in Infernal. They provide a disturbing glimpse into the mind of a mentally unstable minor devil, and are profane in the extreme. Even those who don't understand the language will find the markings unsettling, for mixed in with the jumble of words and phrases are obscene pictographic images representing erinyes and other devils performing unspeakable acts.

Creature: Hezzrack has used this room as a lair during his long years of imprisonment. It is where he continues to store the few valuables he collected from the surrounding chambers and often spent months on end in abject boredom simply laying on the floor in here. Hezzrack's sanity may be unstable, but his intelligence is as keen as ever. He is cunning and treacherous, and single-minded in his ambition to be free of control and free of his prison. His temperament shifts constantly, as do the particulars of his psychosis. He might demonstrate an extreme phobia of enclosed spaces one minute and seem fearful of the outdoors the next. He refers to his skeletal minions by name ("Algrid," "Neffter," "Skinny," "One-Eye," "Champ," "Bonehead," and the dragon "Snapper"), and behaves as though they answer when he speaks to them. If one is destroyed in his presence, he laughs hysterically for a few seconds before bursting into tears... unless it's Champ, in which case he first bursts into a violent and aggressive rage for three rounds, shouting "Checkmate! Checkmate, you fool!" Hezzrack has a fondness bordering on obsession for the game of chess; he may even challenge a PC to a match in the middle of the fight with Snapper and become outraged if the PC refuses to play. DMs are encouraged to roleplay Hezzrack's conflicted personality to the extreme. Hezzrack has never summoned a familiar, since he knows first-hand what a humiliating experience it is living life as a familiar.

HEZZRACK

Hezzrack, male imp wiz 2: CR 3; Tiny outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 3d8 plus 2d4; hp 18; Init +5; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 23, touch 18, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +4; Grp –4; Atk or Full Atk +11 melee (1d4 plus poison, sting); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA poison, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ alternate forms (raven and boar), DR 5/good or silver, darkvision 60 ft, fast healing 2, immunity to poison, resistance to fire 5; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 4, Cha 17.

Skills: Diplomacy +9, Hide +19, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +3, Move Silently +11, Search +9, Spellcraft +13, Spot +3.

Feats: Dodge, Weapon Finesse, Scribe Scroll[B].

Languages: Celestial, Common, Draconic, Goblin, Infernal.

Wizard Spells Prepared (caster level 2nd): 0—*mage hand*, *message* (3); 1st—*chill touch* (+11 melee touch, DC 14), *mage armor*, *magic missile*.

Spell-like abilities (caster level 6): At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only); 1/day—*suggestion* (DC 16).

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*chill touch*, *comprehend languages*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *Tenser's floating disc*, *unseen servant*.

Possessions: *Ring of protection +1*, ancient signet ring, spellbooks.

Tactics: Once the battle between the PCs and the goblins begins, Hezzrack moves to area **13** to watch the action from a safe distance using the scrying

pool. When the conflict gets too close for comfort or Neegla flees to his fountain chamber, Hezzrack falls back to area **14** to hide. Normally the claustrophobic imp would be uncomfortable with the thought of spending more time in his old prison, but this battle is the most excitement he's seen in hundreds of years and Hezzrack is not about to miss a moment of it.

The imp won't attack the PCs unless enraged by his madness or so ordered (the terms of his pact compel him to obey Neegla when given a direct command), but he does defend himself against them if cornered. In such a case, he becomes invisible and tries to incapacitate the most vulnerable targets first.

Treasure: Hidden in the debris lining Hezzrack's den is an ornate brass key to the eastern door, which also bypasses the trap there. A simple key of iron, lying next to it, works with the manacles in area **8**. The two keys look similar, but a successful Search check (DC 20) determines which one is the proper key for the door. The imp's most valued possessions can be found here as well: a care-worn wooden chessboard and a full set of gaming pieces individually carved by Hezzrack's own claws from pieces of dragon bone. They're poorly crafted, though each piece is recognizable, and the set might be worth 30 gp as a curiosity to someone who can be convinced of their origin. Hezzrack, however, believes each piece to be a masterwork of great artistic merit and becomes violent and irrational at any suggestion to the contrary.

Of Hezzrack's personal gear, one item is of particular note. The signet ring which he wears on a tight chain around his ankle is worth only 5 gp, but the skeletons in this adventure are instructed to obey and protect anyone who carries the ring in plain sight. The chain has no clasp and Hezzrack cannot remove it.

Development: Consult Concluding the Adventure for how Hezzrack deals with Neegla's death.

15. NECROMANTIC LABORATORY

This chamber is an ancient magical laboratory. Broken flasks, mortars and pestles, and other exotic paraphernalia litter the floor, apparently thrown about in a chaotic frenzy long ago. Along the north and south walls lie four marble sarcophagi tucked out of the way with their lids closed. Near the center of the room stands a solid-looking granite block serving as an alchemical table. Adorning the table is an assortment of glass fragments, corroded flasks, and other debris, along with a small black leather book bound shut with a matching cord, and a large open tome of faded parchment.

The sarcophagi are empty—Hezzrack's old master stored some of his elite undead warriors here at one time, but they were destroyed defending the tower before it fell. The granite block table isn't as solid as it appears. A successful Search check (DC 20) discovers a hidden compartment containing some of the Treasure.

Treasure: On the table lie two items of significance: the small book is a personal journal of the evil necromancer who once inhabited the tower above, and is worth 150 gp to an interested historian. The open tome is one of that wizard's spellbooks, later used by Hezzrack in his own rudimentary study of magic. Many pages are missing or illegible, shredded and stained by the imp during some of the many uncontrolled rages he unleashed during his imprisonment, but the following spells remain intact and useable: *detect poison*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *message*, *detect undead*, *chill touch*, *see invisibility*, *command undead*, and *clairaudience/clairvoyance*. The spellbook is worth 1,300 gp.

Concealed within the table itself are the following items: a brown suede pouch of 47 gp and 6 pp, a vial of silver ink and a silver ink pen worth 15 gp each, and a single scroll of *animate dead* (caster level 7).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once Neegla is slain, Hezzrack tries to make good his escape—though he may wait outside for the PCs to emerge and toss them a wink, a cackle, and a final parting shot before vanishing and flying off for parts unknown: "That sure was fun! Thanks for all your help, stupid mortals... this is one little devil that won't soon be forgetting you!"

If the imp escaped, he could turn up in the future to harass or manipulate the PCs. Later in their career, the PCs might find Hezzrack in the service of their arch-nemesis, providing the villain with firsthand information on their fighting style, tactics, and weaknesses.

Finally, the magical scrying pool, though limited in range, may become useful to the PCs during future adventures in this region. If they ever discover a need to return to this site, they might find the caves significantly expanded and inhabited by more than just goblins...

ENnie-award-winning mapmaker Christopher West lives with his devoted wife, rambunctious son, and one antisocial cat in Northwestern Pennsylvania, where he spends his time planning games, playing games, and occasionally finding time to work on maps for games. His cartography career began in these pages, and he has created maps for more than 40 DUNGEON *adventures over the last several years, including the entire Shackled City Adventure Path. "Unfamiliar Ground" is the first one he actually wrote.*

Scaling the Adventure

Although "Unfamiliar Ground" is designed for a group of 3rd-level characters, it can be modified to suit parties of various levels. Remember to adjust treasures gained if you adjust the difficulty of the adventure.

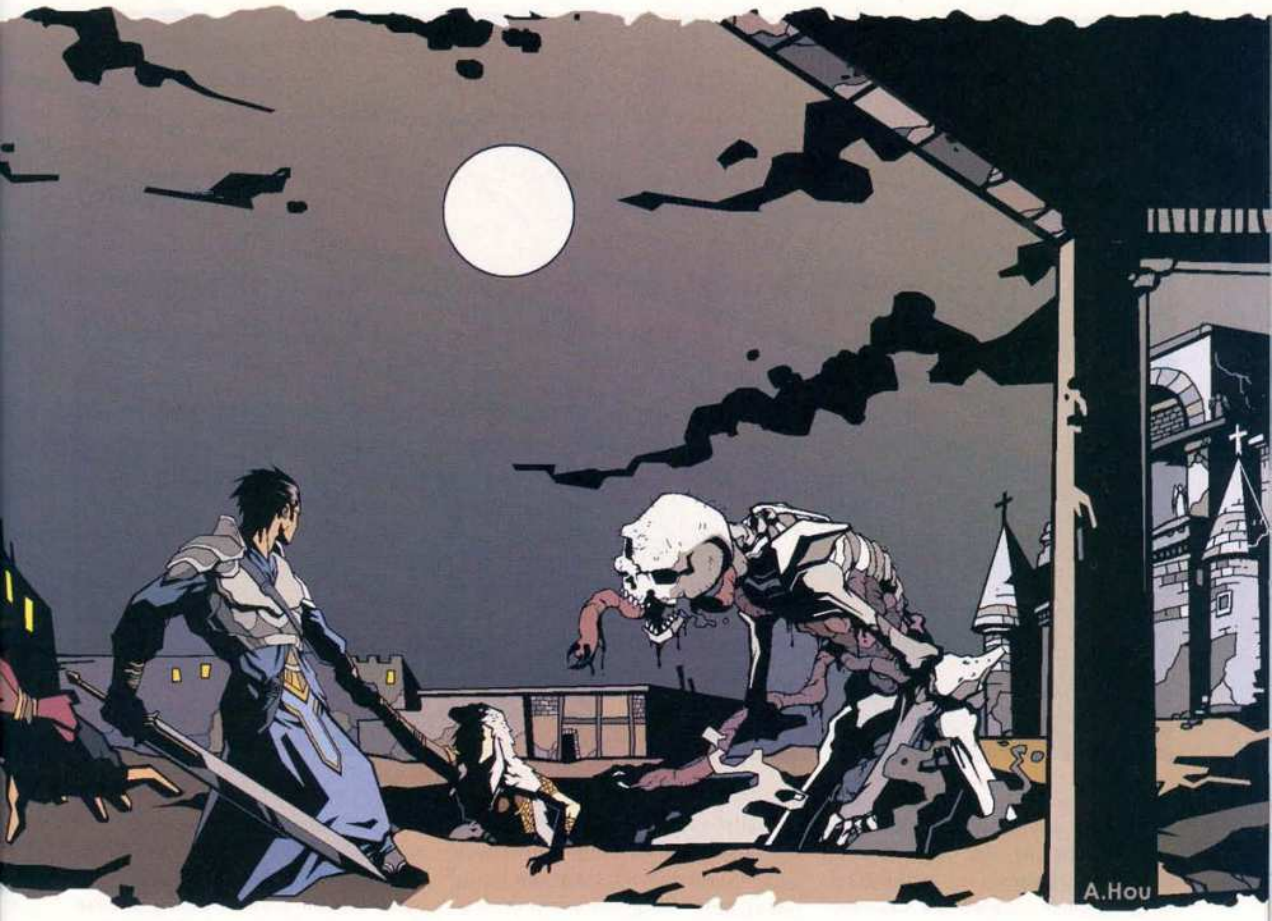
1st–2nd-level PCs: Make Neegla's magic weapon a normal *+1 heavy pick*. Reduce the total number of goblins in the band to 10 and avoid letting the party encounter more than half of them at any given time. Reduce the number of Medium skeletons in area **12** to 4. The skeletal dragon, even in its damaged state, is simply too powerful a monster for such low-level parties. The dragon skeleton still lurks in the scrying pool, but it is no longer animated. Put an owlbear skeleton in the room to challenge the PCs.

4th–5th-level PCs: Advance the lake snake's Hit Dice by 3, making it a Large animal. Turn all of the goblins, including Neegla, into hobgoblins. Make Neegla a 2nd-level cleric of Maglubiyet in addition to her adept and warrior levels. Add four gnoll skeletons to the sarcophagi in area **15** and place a Medium water elemental in area **9**. Advance Hezzrack by 2 wizard levels. The skeletal dragon remains a challenge even for higher-level PCs, but you should still consider giving it back its second claw and increasing its hit points to closer to its normal maximum nonetheless; this encounter should be the toughest in the adventure.

WRATH OF THE ABYSS

BY GREG A. VAUGHAN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDREW HOU
CARTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI

Any Setting • Mid-level • Dungeon Crawl



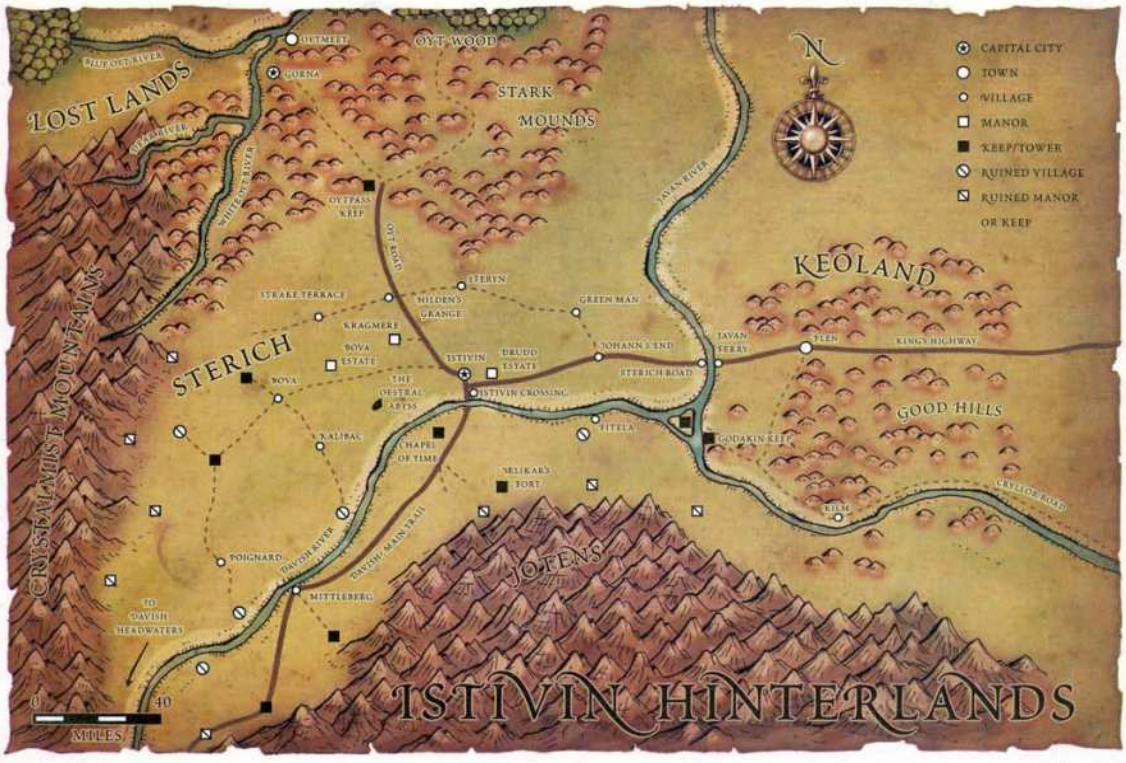
A malevolent entity grows within the stony foundations and sagging walls of the city of Istivin. The city's salvation lies deep beneath its troubled streets, deep in the Underdark and imprisoned in a forgotten drow stronghold. But the drow have their own plans for the dying city, and they won't give up their prisoner without a fight.

"Wrath of the Abyss" is the third and final adventure in the *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc that began in *DUNGEON* #117. If you're looking for more information on the city of Istivin, check out "City of Shadows" in *DUNGEON* #117, which contains a detailed background for Istivin. Since most of this adventure takes place outside the city walls, the information in that article is not necessary to play "Wrath of the Abyss." As with the previous two adventures in this Campaign Arc, "Touch of the Abyss" and "Shadow of the Abyss," this adventure contains an alternate beginning and ending to allow it to stand alone.

"Wrath of the Abyss" is designed for four 12th-level characters, and any combination of classes can be used (though good party balance is always beneficial). The PCs should accumulate enough experience mid-way through this adventure to advance to 13th level. As some of the final encounters in "Wrath of the Abyss" are quite challenging, you should allow the PCs to advance in level as soon as they've accumulated enough experience.

Adventure Background

Sterich existed for centuries in the shadow of the great western mountains, and faced countless dangers spawned above and below those frozen peaks. Incursions of giant raiders were a constant problem, but always one the Border Companies could handle. That is, until organized giant attacks began in earnest eighteen years ago. These attacks overwhelmed the Border Companies, and a foul curse fell upon the capital city of Istivin. The entire citadel of the earl and a good portion of the city was swallowed in an immense black hemisphere. This black dome was part of a plot by the demon-queen Lolth to absorb the world of Oerth into her layer of the Abyss. It took the timely intervention of a stalwart band of adventurers to defeat the giants and avert Lolth's plans. These events are described in the AD&D 1st Edition game adventure *GDQ 1-7 Queen of the Spiders*.



Ten years ago, danger again threatened to consume Sterich as swarms of savage humanoids led by the giant King Galmoor invaded the earldom. Sterich was overrun as its population was slaughtered or forced to flee. The earl's court abandoned Istivin, relocating itself to the neighboring kingdom of Keoland. It took two full years to liberate Sterich. Yet unlike the rest of the cities and towns in Sterich, which had been occupied and razed, Istivin remained intact. There was no sign that Galmoor or his occupying armies had ever been there. Querchard, promoted to marquis by the King of Keoland, returned to Istivin with his court and began to rebuild. But today the city seems troubled—tempers flare with shocking suddenness, people vanish off the streets at night, and the very shadows seem to conspire against the light. Istivin is in fact still under siege.

The city's grim situation began with Lolth's invasion eighteen years ago. When the Demon Queen of Spiders partially absorbed Istivin into the Abyss, she unwittingly allowed an ancient and powerful Abyssal entity known as the Malgoth to enter the city. Little more than a disembodied intelligence bound to a seething, formless hatred, the Malgoth's physical body had been destroyed in ages past by a consortium of jealous demon lords. For eons it waited, slowly organizing and rebuilding itself. Still without physical substance, the Malgoth settled into the very stones of the city's streets. After Lolth's black sphere was destroyed, the Malgoth remained behind, a shadowy parasite in the hidden places of a wounded city.

Years later, when Sterich fell to the giants, King Galamoor's retinue included a frost giant cleric named Ilkharis. A worshiper of Kostchtchie, the favored demon lord of frost giants and all things frozen, Ilkharis served Galamoor as his chief advisor. Ilkharis soon sensed the Malgoth's presence in the form of particularly lucid dreams, and was able to contact the entity using his spells. After discovering what he believed to be an imprisoned demon, Ilkharis swore loyalty and, at the Malgoth's bidding, had his underlings seize King Galmoor in the dead of night. The giant-king was brought to the city square, where Ilkharis sacrificed him in a complex ritual designed to allow the Malgoth to use Galmoor's body as a focus for its essence, similar to a lich's phylactery. The giant's corpse was absorbed into the ground, and the savage armies, overcome with fear, fled into the countryside. Ilkharis left Istivin as well, to allow the Malgoth to grow and gather its power undisturbed.

When the forces of Sterich reoccupied Istivin, they found it hauntingly deserted. Though they celebrated its liberation, a new sense of despair and bitterness pervaded the atmosphere. Good will disappeared among neighbors, and tempers flared unaccountably into violence. Petty nobles and con artists began to greedily grab up lands and

titles lost to others who had fallen during the war, contributing to the overall tension. Today mysterious accidents and deaths occur with alarming frequency, and incidences of madness are on the rise. Many people have disappeared in the night, including Marquis Querchard. The streets are deserted after dark. All of this is due to the Malgoth's dark influence.

Today a state of underworld warfare exists between the Malgoth's minions and a band of drow who have their own designs on the city. The drow have invaded Istivin under deep cover identities, but the Malgoth is gaining in power and is rooting them out. All of this occurs beyond the knowledge of the general population and only adds to the mystery and violence that haunts Istivin.

The Story So Far

In "Touch of the Abyss," the PCs discovered that the lost Marquis of Istivin in fact still lived, but had succumbed to the Malgoth's possession and had become little more than a mouthpiece for the evil Abyssal entity. They confronted the possessed Marquis deep in the dungeons below Krelont Keep, and learned that the Malgoth's essence had been bound to the city by a powerful frost giant cleric named Ilkharis. After tracking this giant to the borders of Sterich, they found that the border keep Ilkharis once ruled had fallen to one of his lieutenants in a bloody coup. After battling the keep's new giant rulers, the PCs discovered that the frost giants had traded Ilkharis to a band of drow that dwells deep under Sterich. In return, the drow offered an alliance that could lead to the reunification of giant tribes scattered throughout the Sterich borderlands. If the PCs hope to defeat the Malgoth and stop this alliance, they'll need to journey into the Underdark and seek out the drow who now hold Ilkharis prisoner.

Adventure Synopsis

The party travels to the Underdark entrance—a rift in the ground in central Sterich known as the Oestral Abyss. The party finds that demonic and arachnid minions of the drow guard the rift. They then follow the passages from the rift for miles into the Underdark, finally reaching the drow-held caverns of Mirith Glarnon beneath Istivin itself. Within the caverns the party battles the depraved remnants of a once powerful drow noble house and learns of the sinister alliances they are creating as they struggle to return to prominence. The PCs also learn that the drow are fighting a hidden war with the Malgoth for the soul of Istivin.

Finally discovering Ilkharis deep in the bowels of Mirith Glarnon, the party learns from him how to destroy the Malgoth once and for all. The PCs race to the surface only to find that the Malgoth has already begun its overt campaign to completely dominate Istivin. In the city's central square, the party must unearth the corpse of the giant-king Galmoor, which the Malgoth now uses as a focus for its presence in the city. As the giant-king's corpse is destroyed, the Malgoth is forced to manifest physically, driving the party into a final battle to decide Istivin's fate.

Adventure Hooks

If you're playing "Wrath of the Abyss" as part of the *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc, this adventure begins as the PCs reach the Oestral Abyss. If, on the other hand, you wish to run "Wrath of the Abyss" as a stand-alone adventure, you can instead use the following adventure hook to involve the PCs.

The adventure begins in Istivin before the Malgoth aquires its greater influence over the city as described in Chapter Three. Algorthas the Seer, a famous sage and scholar, approaches the PCs with a request. It seems that five drow were recently found dead in the city's center, wearing the garb of prominent nobles who subsequently disappeared. One of the drow was disguised as a minor noble named Tyrell Palsidarian, who was also one of Algorthas's friends. Anxious to discover his friend's fate, Algorthas paid for several divination spells and discovered that he was still alive, imprisoned by the drow in a place called Mirith Glarnon. With a little more research, Algorthas was able to learn that Mirith Glarnon referred to a cave network deep below Istivin, and that it could be reached via an entrance to the Underdark in the great sinkhole known as the Oestral Abyss.

If you run the adventure as a stand-alone, exclude the final encounters that take place in Qualtaine Square. If you wish to play out the full ending, the party can get a quick education from Ilkharis about the greater threat in Istivin, after which the PCs can return to the city, unearth Galamor, and destroy the Malgoth.

CHAPTER ONE: THE OESTRAL ABYSS

The ancient House of Oester was one of the first noble houses to be granted a title by the earl of Sterich. Alas, these auspicious beginnings did not end pleasantly for House Oester, and the name has since become a synonym of "ill-fortune" in Sterich. Where the respectable Oester hold once sat there is now nothing but a dark gaping hole from which occasional clouds of gas emerge from lightless depths. The manor met its doom over 350 years ago. One night, a monstrous rumbling awakened the local serfs. They emerged from their hovels to find the small keep gone and an open crater in its place. Local myth suggests that the hole is bottomless and that none have plumbed its depths. It became known as the Oestral Abyss. Nowadays the wags of Istivin whisper that the present troubles of the unfortunate Querchard stem from "a bit of the old Oester in his veins."

In reality, the Oester misfortunes are just that—misfortunes. Balis Oester unknowingly constructed his keep over a massive limestone cavern. The combination of centuries of erosion underneath the keep and a minor earthquake caused a massive sinkhole that swallowed the house. The sinkhole is far from bottomless—it's only 200 feet deep, and piled at its bottom are the ruins of the ancient keep. These ruins have been picked clean, because the sinkhole also serves as an entrance to the Underdark.

Easily located, the Oestral Abyss is little more than a large hole in the ground in the midst of what was once a fine estate. Now overgrown with brush and trees, all that remains of the estate are the foundations of a few outbuildings. Anything of value within these upper ruins has long-since been carted off. Occasionally clouds of dark, foul-smelling gasses rise from the depths of the pit, but these are rare and ultimately harmless.

A. The Shaft of the Abyss

This yawning gulf disappears into darkness below, and even the noon sun fails to illuminate the pit's depths. This limestone sinkhole has rough walls providing many hand and footholds (Climb DC 15). It descends 200 feet to its terminus, a rubble-choked floor detailed in area **C**. A large oak tree grows near the pit's edge, providing a convenient place to fasten a rope for descent into the pit. A Spot check (DC 30) reveals that rope has been tied to this tree at some time in the past to allow access to the pit, but most of the drow now use *levitate* to negotiate into the pit.

After 30 feet, the pit's shaft becomes obscured by a persistent *darkness* effect. This *darkness* functions at caster level 15, and if dispelled is only suppressed for 1d4 rounds before it returns. In a way, the entire pit is a massive magic item, enchanted years ago by Derakhshan, the current ruler of the drow caverns of Mirith Glarnon. The darkness provides concealment for all creatures in the pit. Worse, it obscures the thick strands of spider webbing that line the shaft's walls and crisscross its breadth. The shaft's denizens spun these webs to hamper intruders. A character who climbs, falls, or flies further than 30 feet down into the pit has a 20% chance per 10 feet of coming into contact with one of these webs. If this occurs, the creature can make a DC 20 Spot check to notice and avoid the web (unless the creature is falling, in which case he cannot avoid the web). A creature that contacts a web becomes trapped. Escape from the web is possible with a DC 24 Strength check or a DC 20 Escape Artist check; these checks gain a +5 bonus if the victim has something solid to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each 5-foot section of webs has hardness 5 and 16 hit points. Of course, once something touches a web, the monstrous denizens of the Spider Queen's Womb (area **B**) notice and quickly come to investigate.

One section of the pit is relatively clear of webs—the area opposite the oak tree. Characters who fly or fall down the shaft here have no chance of contacting any webs (those who climb have normal chances to come into contact with webs), and eventually arrive at area **D**. This is where the drow typically *levitate* into or out of the pit.

B. The Spider Queen's Womb (EL 13)

Creatures: Fifty feet down the pit's western face is the den of a pack of fiendish monstrous spiders loyal to the drow of Mirith Glarnon. This lair is an ovoid cavern strung with layers of webbing, from which cocooned victims are suspended along with the dried husks of older meals mixed with bones and various debris.

The drow of Mirith Glarnon mockingly refer to this cavern as the Spider Queen's Womb. The spiders are accustomed to drow and do not attack them or anyone accompanied by them. Likewise, they never approach within 40 feet of the pit's floor (area **C**), leaving that region to the demon that lives there. Three gargantuan spiders dwell in this pit. They wait until they sense a victim become trapped in the webs; the spiders do not suffer miss chances from the darkness thanks to their tremorsense ability when attacking climbing creatures or anything in contact with their webs.

Gargantuan fiendish monstrous spiders (3): CR 10; Gargantuan magical beast (extraplanar); HD 16d8+32; hp 104; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +12; Grp +31; Atk or Full Atk +16 melee (3d8+10/19–20 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 20 ft./15 ft.; SA poison (DC 22, 2d6/2d6 Str), smite good (1/day, +16 damage), web; SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, spell resistance 21, tremorsense 60 ft. (no range limit for sensing tremors in the webs), vermin traits; AL CE; Str 25, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 2; *Monster Manual* 289.

Skills: Climb +15, Hide +4 (+8 in webs), Move Silently +12 (+20 in webs), Spot +4.

Feats: Ability Focus (poison), Improved Critical (bite), Improved Natural Armor (2), Improved Natural Weapon (bite), Weapon Focus (bite).

Languages: Abyssal.

Treasure: Among the webbing and cocooned remains can be found a split pouch spilling 150 gp onto the floor of the cave and a desiccated corpse wearing *gloves of swimming and climbing*.

C. House Oester (EL 10)

The crushed and crumbled remnants of the Oester manor lie at the bottom of this pit. The shattered ruin is composed of a tangled mess of jagged timbers and rocks upon which are skewered countless remains. Numerous cavities and openings in the rubble testify to hidden tunnels throughout the collapsed keep.

Creature: The tunnels inside these ruins form the lair of a bebilith loyal to the drow of Mirith Glarnon. It serves as the guardian for this entrance to the Underdark, and is the primary reason no intruders have succeeded in plumbing the sinkhole's depths. The bones of its victims are scattered throughout the ruins. The drow often engage the bebilith's aid when they need to transport heavy loads to the surface or down from above to area **D**. The bebilith constantly takes 10 on its Listen checks, and if it hears combat begin in the shaft above it hides directly under the entrance to area **D** and prepares to attack anyone who tries to enter the tunnel. The demon pursues fleeing victims as far as necessary down the tunnel leading into the Underdark, but only pursues them as far as the edge of the pit above if they flee back to the surface.

Zephru, bebilith demon: hp 150; *Monster Manual* 42.

D. Entrance to the Underdark

This dark tunnel descends in an easterly direction. Harmless gasses occasionally vent from fissures in this passage. Examination of the tunnel floor shows that traffic has come through here with some regularity. This tunnel leads to the caverns of Mirith Glarnon beneath Istivin.

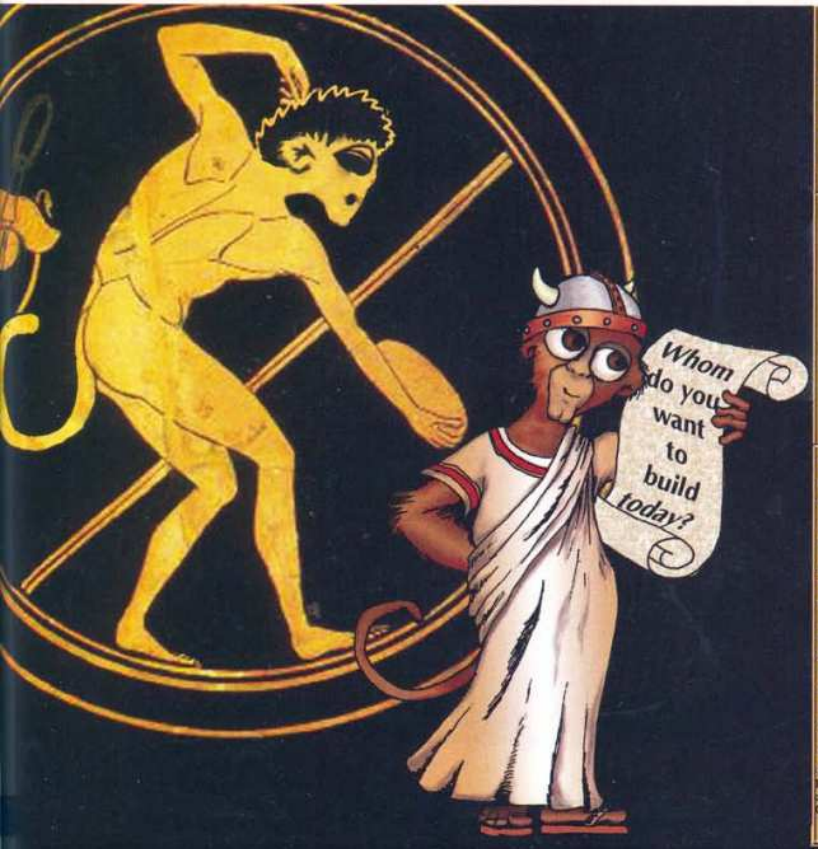
The Underdark

The tunnel from area **D** continues for approximately 15 miles before it ends at the caverns of Mirith Glarnon. It averages at 20 feet in width, and has a ceiling height of 15 to 20 feet with many stalactites. In places the tunnel has been worked to widen it or smooth the passage. Secondary passages (rarely more than 10 feet wide) and tertiary passages (never more than 5 feet wide) open off the main tunnel infrequently, but these obviously don't see as much traffic and lead deeper into the Underdark. They can be used to expand the adventure deeper into this dangerous region as you wish.

Underdark Random Encounter Table

d% roll	Encounter	Source	Average EL
01–05	1 beholder	*Monster Manual* 26	13
06–10	1 abyssal greater basilisk	*Monster Manual* 24	12
11–15	1 purple worm	*Monster Manual* 211	12
16–20	1 ropers	*Monster Manual* 215	12
21–40	Drow patrol	See below	11
41–50	1d6 elder xorn	*Monster Manual* 260	11
51–60	1d6 mind flayers	*Monster Manual* 187	11
61–70	2d4 cloakers	*Monster Manual* 36	10
71–85	1d4 umber hulks	*Monster Manual* 248	9
86–100	1d2 behirs	*Monster Manual* 25	8

A sample map for a stretch of the corridor has been provided. This map shows some of the common features that appear in the passageway, including spur caverns, stalagmites, ledges, columns, pools of water from a few inches to several feet deep, and occasional side caverns hewn out as campsites by Underdark travelers. The terrain of the tunnel should be considered a hill trail for movement purposes as described on pages 163–164 of the *Player's Handbook*, so it is possible to make the trip in one day of walking for a character with Speed 30 ft. As the party travels, they have a 10% chance per mile of having an encounter with one of the region's indigenous menaces. If the party decides to camp in the passageway, check for encounters once per hour if they camp



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THE OESTRAL ABYSS
N
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PLAN VIEW
SIDE VIEW
A
B
C
D
ONE SQUARE: 10 FEET

in the main passageway, or once every four hours if they camp in a side cave.

Drow Patrol: This patrol out of Mirith Glarnon is composed of four drow rangers and their four displacer beast companions (see Mirith Glarnon, area 7 for stats). Fanatical followers of their House, these drow will die before giving out any information about their kin. Do not remove any drow or displacer beasts from Mirith Glarnon if these are killed, as these patrols represent forces that are constantly deployed into the surrounding Underdark to patrol for threats.

Diplomatic Resolutions: Not all of these wandering monsters immediately attack the PCs. With a successful DC 25 Diplomacy or Intimidate check (or a bribe of at least 2,000 gp) the cloakers, xorn, and even the beholder will let the PCs pass if they can be convinced the PCs are here to confront the drow of Mirith Glarnon. With a DC 40 Diplomacy or Intimidate check (or a bribe of at least 5,000 gp) these creatures even take the time to give estimates of the numbers of drow, bugbears, and trolls found in Mirith Glarnon, and can confirm that a giant was recently taken there as a prisoner.

CHAPTER TWO: MIRITH GLARNON

Roughly translated "Cradle of Vengeance," Mirith Glarnon is a relatively new drow outpost occupied by an outcast remnant of heretics from the Vault of the Drow. Though they no longer speak the name to outsiders, these drow were once of the infamous House Eilservs of the drow city Erelhei-Cinlu located deep beneath the

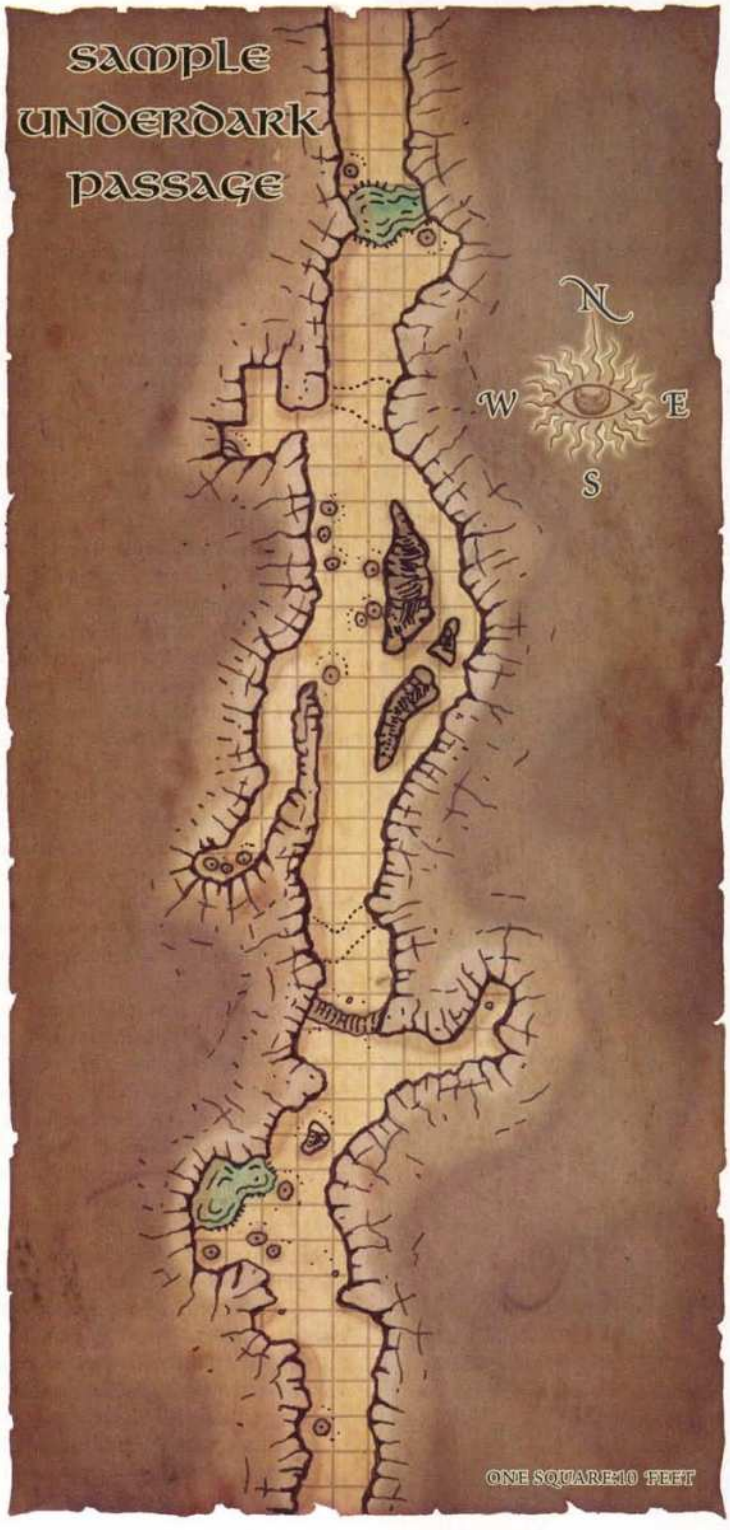
Highborn Drow

The drow in Mirith Glarnon have this rare drow feat, a vestige of their once proud standing amongst Erelhei-Cinlu's nobility.

Prerequisites: Drow, base Will save +2.

Benefit: You may use *detect good*, *detect magic*, and *levitate* once per day as spell-like abilities with a caster level equal to your character level.

This feat originally appeared in *Races of Faerûn*.



Hellfurnaces. Eilservs and its powerful leader, the Lady Eclavdra, had a long history of machinations in the surface world in their pursuit of ever more power. In fact, it was Eclavdra who met with the Pomarj cleric Stalmin Klim in the caves beneath Istivin to plan and organize the creation of the Slave Lords of the Pomarj. Her own protégé Edralve served as a member of the notorious Slave Lord council.

Eclavdra and house Eilservs also had a hidden agenda. Eighteen years ago, when Lolth unleashed her black hemisphere upon Istivin, Eilservs set into motion the simultaneous giant invasion of Sterich. This invasion was launched not for Lolth, but as house Eilservs' own bid for power, for Eclavdra was in fact a heretic and worshiper of an ancient deity known only as the Elder Elemental Eye. It was a fortunate stroke of luck that the adventurers who succeeded in thwarting Lolth's invasion also ruined Eclavdra's plans in one fell blow. After that debacle, a period of great turmoil engulfed Erelhei-Cinlu as the vengeful priestesses of Lolth turned their anger upon the apostate House Eilservs. War ensued between Eilservs and its allies and the rest of the Vault of the Drow. In the fighting Eilservs was completely eradicated, though their allies in House Tormtor were saved by a timely alliance with the githyanki that created a stalemate within the Vault. Nevertheless, Eilservs was no more... or so it was thought.

In truth, when the entire might of Lolth's priesthood was brought to bear on Eilservs, a noble of the House named Derakhshan secretly cut a deal. He gave up crucial elements of House defenses, and in so doing sacrificed the megalomaniacal Eclavdra to her enemies. In exchange he was allowed to escape the Vault along with a small handful of allies and servitors. Knowing that his new "allies" would ultimately betray them, Derakhshan used all of his power to cover their trail. They retreated to the forgotten caverns of Mirith Glarnon to recover and rebuild.

Eventually, word came to Derakhshan that Eclavdra survived the purge of house Eilservs. Worse, she has been accepted back into the religious fold by the Spider Queen, and now wields more power than ever. Rumor holds that house Eilservs once again commands power in Erelhei-Cinlu, yet no message has come to Derakhshan concerning the return of the refugees. As the years wore on, the outcast drow's anger grew, and finally he made the decision to build up his forces and bring a new age of retribution upon the Vault of the Drow. But first, he had to find an army.

The answer to this need, he decided, was to assume control of Istivin by replacing its nobles and leaders with members of his own House. After extensive spying revealed a target's mannerisms, the altar in area **15** was used to magically transform one of his drow to match the target's appearance. The target was then kidnapped and seamlessly replaced with his or her double. All was going according to plan, until the Malgoth discovered them. It began hunting down and slaying their spies, and recently killed five drow that were posing as human nobles. By capturing Ilkharis, Derakhshan hopes to find a way to displace the Malgoth and resume his invasion of Istivin.

Mirith Glarnon consists of a series of natural caverns that have seen only minimal modification by the drow. These caves are quite deep, with towering vaulted ceilings that are twice as high as a given chamber's diameter unless otherwise noted. Many of the caverns extend through several levels before reaching a floor or ceiling. Damp stalactites and small pools of potable water are common, as are stalagmites, though some of these have been cleared away to allow better use of the cavern floor. Unless otherwise noted, it's a DC 30 Climb check to scale the slippery rock walls of these caverns. The caverns are not illuminated unless otherwise indicated in the text. All creatures inside Mirith Glarnon are protected with a *nondetection* spell (caster level 20).

The drow of Mirith Glarnon remain worshipers of the Elder Elemental Eye to this day, and the only thing that matches their hatred of surface dwellers is their hatred for Lolth's faithful. They tolerate the presence of the fiendish spiders and bebelith in the Oestral Abyss simply because they are valuable guardians, but in their lair they suffer no vermin. These drow are also all descended from the proud nobility of House Eilservs, and as such have access to a specialized feat that aids them in navigating the vertical reaches of Mirith Glarnon. Additionally, they have made several powerful allies, not least of which are a pack of loyal displacer beasts and a particularly dangerous vampire and succubus who were nearly slain years ago by the same adventurers who brought ruin to the Vault of the Drow.

1. Lower Entrance (EL 11)

This high-ceiling chamber shows signs of habitation—bedrolls and heaps of clothing and supplies lie on the floor near the north and south walls. Two five-foot-high ledges to the east allow access into another cavern.

This cave serves as the guard room for Mirith Glarnon's western entrance, as well as quarters for part of the bugbear tribe that serves the drow here.

Creatures: Quartered here are seven bugbears, three of which are always awake and watching the western passage. The rest either sleep or chew on tough strips of lizard leather to pass the time. They're under orders to attack anyone they don't recognize, on sight, unless the password "Shruzgrap" is spoken. Their drow masters have instilled in them a healthy fear of discovery by Erelhei-Cinlu, so they fear unknown drow almost as much as they fear an incursion of surface dwellers.

Bugbear fighter 3 (7): CR 5; Medium humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d8+9 plus 3d10+9; hp 48 each; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +5; Grp +10; Atk or Full Atk +12 melee (1d8+6, +1 *morningstar*) or +10 melee (1d8+5/×3, longspear) or +7 ranged (1d6+5, javelin); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear); SA —; SQ darkvision 60 ft., scent; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8; Will +2; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 6; *Monster Manual* 29.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +6, Listen +5, Move Silently +10, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (morningstar).

Languages: Common, Elven, Goblin.

Possessions: *+1 chainmail*, light wooden shield, *+1 morningstar*, longspear, 3 javelins.

Tactics: If battle is joined, the bugbears in area **2** gather at the eastern ledges and support their kin here with ranged attacks. A second rank of bugbears stands behind them with longspears and fends off attempts to mount the ledge.

Treasure: Mixed in with the bugbears' bedrolls and piles of possessions are their accumulated valuables. A successful Search check (DC 20) turns up 912 sp, 380 gp, an amethyst worth 100 gp, a crude humanoid figurine carved from jasper representing the bugbear god Hruggek worth 75 gp, and a *potion of remove fear*.

2. Bugbear Warren (EL 13)

A ledge overlooks this twenty-foot-high cavern from the east. A tunnel leads east, just south of this ledge. Several stalagmites have been sawed off to form flat seats, and one has been hollowed out to form a crude brazier. Atop the hot coals of this brazier are several strips of flayed cave lizard. Bedrolls and supplies are pushed up against the walls.

The rest of the bugbears who serve the exiled drow live in this chamber. Down the east passage is another ledge, this one 10 feet high rather than 15 feet high like the one to the north. A 12-foot ladder lies against the east wall to access these two ledges. A small side cavern spurs off of the eastern passage and serves as the abode for the tribe's chief. This small cavern has soiled cloth wall hangings and a pile of bolts of cloth as a bed.

Creatures: Six more bugbears lurk here, all members of the fragmented tribe that accompanied the Eilservs to these caverns. One bugbear is always posted atop the northern ledge as a lookout. These bugbears respond to any battles in area **1** as described there. The chief resides in the small side cavern and joins any battle in here in 4 rounds by attempting a death attack.

Chief Ruddug was once the sub-chief of a tribe loyal to the drow of Erelhei-Cinlu. When adventurers slew his chief, this massive bugbear murdered the chief's son in order to take over the tribe. The tribe rebelled and he was forced to flee with only a few loyal followers. He encountered the fleeing Eilservs survivors and allied with them for mutual protection. The bugbears are not permitted by the drow to travel east into the caverns and know nothing of its layout or the number of drow within.

Bugbear fighter 3 (6): hp 48 each; see page 37.

Chief Ruddug, male bugbear fighter 6/assassin 4: CR 12; Medium humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d8+6 plus 6d10+12 plus 4d6+8; hp 86; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +11; Grp +17; Atk +15 melee (1d8+15, *+2 morningstar* with 5-point Power Attack) or +15 ranged (1d6+6 plus poison, masterwork javelin); Full Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d8+15, *+2 morningstar* with 5-point Power Attack) or +15 ranged (1d6+6 plus poison, masterwork javelin); SA death attack (DC 16), sneak attack +2d6, spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., poison use, scent, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +9 (+11 vs. poison), Ref +14 Will +3; Str 22, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 8; *Monster Manual* 29.

Skills: Climb +21, Hide +17, Intimidate +5, Jump +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +20, Spot +6, Swim +6.

Feats: Alertness, Athletic, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (morningstar), Weapon Specialization (morningstar).

Languages: Common, Elven, Goblin

Assassin Spells Known (4/2; caster level 4): 1—*detect poison, feather fall, jump, true strike*; 2nd—*cat's grace, invisibility, spider climb*.

Possessions: *+1 breastplate*, heavy steel shield, *+2 morningstar*, 3 masterwork javelins poisoned with Medium spider venom, *gloves of Dexterity +2, boots of elvenkind*, vial holding 5 doses of Medium spider venom (Fortitude DC 14, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str).

Treasure: The bugbears keep their

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MIRITH GLARNON
UPPER CAVERNS
TO THE OESTRAL ABYSS
MIDDLE CAVERNS
TO ISTIVIN
LOWER CAVERNS
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ONE SQUARE=10 FEET

treasure scattered amongst their belongings. A successful DC 20 Search check of the bedrolls reveals 1,025 sp, 235 gp, five small bloodstones worth 25 gp each, two *potions of cure light wounds*, three tindertwigs, and two vials of antitoxin. Chief Ruddug keeps a bag of personal treasures on a high natural shelf behind a stone (Search DC 25 to notice) in the small side cave. This bag holds 450 sp, 139 gp, 18 pp, and 7 peridots worth 50 gp each.

3. Crawling Cavern (EL 12)

This vast cavern is a tangled maze of stalactites and stalagmites with a ceiling thirty-five feet overhead. Some of the stalactites and stalagmites have grown together over the years, forming columns of rock. A jumble of bones covers the ground, and slithering and crawling amongst the bones are hundreds of thousands of little white worms.

The tangled carpet of bones makes movement through this cave difficult; treat the floor as dense rubble (2 squares of movement to enter a square, adds 5 to Balance and Tumble check DCs, and adds 2 to the DC of Move Silently checks). The crawling worms are scavengers who feed on what's left over from the denizens' meals. They might look disgusting, but they're harmless to the PCs.

Hidden under a thin layer of bones in the center of the cave is a secret trap door leading down to area **5**. A successful DC 20 Search check uncovers this trap door, which the drow of the middle caverns use as secret escape route to the upper caverns.

Creatures: One of the vilest of the Eilservs drow is a lunatic named Zurrock who calls himself the Crawling Master. The other drow barely tolerate this vicious brute and relegate him and his filthy pets to the Upper Caverns to serve as guards. This is fine with Zurrock, as he prefers the company of his four abnormally large carrion crawlers and takes delight in terrorizing the bugbears with them, allowing the crawlers to paralyze those who creep too close and then tormenting them until the paralysis wears off and they can escape back to the west. The bugbears often capture other monsters in the western tunnel and throw them up into this room for Zurrock and his crawlers to eat; in so doing, they hope to remain on the insane drow's good side.

Zurrock is a tall brute who has spent a great deal of time on the surface in the service of his house, magically disguised as a human warrior. He wears blackened half-plate and has a disgusting face-guard on his helmet created from the mouth and mandibles of a carrion crawler. His own half-insane drooling only adds to the image. The carrion crawlers have inexplicably taken to Zurrock, and vice versa. At his command the carrion crawlers swarm the party from all directions while he attempts to hack weaker-looking members apart with his axe.

Advanced carrion crawlers (4): CR 7; Huge aberration; HD 9d8+36; hp 76; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +6; Grp +18; Atk +10 melee (paralysis, tentacle); Full Atk +10 melee (paralysis, 8 tentacles) and +5 melee (1d6+6, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA paralysis (DC 20); SQ darkvision 60 ft., scent; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 22, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 6; *Monster Manual* 30.

Skills: Climb +20, Listen +7, Spot +7.

Feats: Ability Focus (paralysis), Alertness[B], Combat Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Track.

Zurrock the Crawling Master, male drow fighter 8: CR 9; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 8d10+16; hp 71; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +14 melee (1d12+9/×3, *+1 greataxe*); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d12+9/×3, *+1 greataxe*); SA spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft., light blindness, spell resistance 19; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +0 (+2 against spells and spell-like abilities); Str 18, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 6, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +2, Disguise +7, Handle Animal +16, Intimidate +9, Ride +2.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Highborn Drow, Improved Initiative[B], Power Attack[B], Skill Focus (Handle Animal), Weapon Focus (greataxe)[B], Weapon Specialization (greataxe)[B].

Languages: Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 8): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, detect good, detect magic, faerie fire, levitate.*

Possessions: +1 half-plate, +1 greataxe, boots of striding and springing, ring of sustenance.

4. Upper Entrance (EL 14)

The path hugs the north wall of the cavern as the floor drops away at a steep incline to the south. After descending forty feet the incline drops off into darkness below. Halfway down the incline is a narrow ledge. The moisture in the cavern and a slight updraft from below creates a swirling mist that clings to the path and incline, making footing treacherous at best.

While this cavern appears sinister, it is actually much worse. A horrific pair of ancient menaces inhabits this area, and even the drow tread lightly around them. The eastern passage travels a quarter mile and exits at the surface outside Istivin. Anyone on the path facing east can make a Spot check (DC 25) to notice hand and footholds carved into the south wall of the column descending to area **6** 50 feet below. These were carved by the drow and can be traversed with a Climb check (DC 15), although the drow generally use *levitate* to move through this area.

The small ledge contains a narrow crack that leads 20 feet to the northeast, opening into a circular cavern about 15 feet in diameter. The crack leading to this cave is quite narrow, and only Diminuitive or smaller creatures can navigate it with ease. A Tiny creature can navigate it with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 30), but it's impassible to larger creatures. The cave beyond is the lair of the two guardians of this area, who use *gaseous form* or *greater teleport* to exit and enter.

Creatures: The guardians of this cavern are a powerful drow vampire named Belgos and his lover, a succubus sorcerer named Silussa. This deadly pair once inhabited a cavern near the Vault of the Drow, until adventurers slew Silussa and staked Belgos before moving on to the Vault. When the drow exiles later fled the

Vault, they came upon Belgos and revived him by removing the stake. Derakhshan promised to find a way to resurrect Silussa if Belgos would accompany them and aid in the defense of their new home, once they found one. The vampire agreed, and after the exiles arrived at Mirith Glarnon, Derakhshan revealed he had stolen a scroll of *miracle* from House Eilservs as he fled. To repay the vampire, he used the scroll to restore Silussa to life. Since then, the two have remained loyal allies with Derakhshan, although they feel little allegiance to the other drow in the area.

Silussa's familiar, a bat named Miori, lurks in this area. If she sees any intruders, she immediately flies into their cave via the crack in the ledge, and the two quickly come to investigate.

Belgos, male drow vampire fighter 10: CR 12; Medium undead (augmented humanoid); HD 10d12 plus 10; hp 75; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29, touch 17, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +10; Grp +15; Atk +15 melee (1d6+5 plus energy drain, slam); Full Atk +17/+12 melee (1d8+8/17–20, *+1 keen longsword*) and +10 melee (1d6+2 plus energy drain, slam); SA blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 19), energy drain; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver and magic, darkvision 120 ft., fast healing 5, gaseous form, light blindness, resistance to cold 10 and electricity 10, spell resistance 21, spider climb, turn resistance +4, undead traits, vampire weaknesses; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +4 (+6 against spells and spell-like abilities); Str 20, Dex 23, Con —, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 18; *Monster Manual* 250.

Skills: Climb +18, Intimidate +17, Ride +19, Tumble +12.

Feats: Alertness[B], Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge[B], Highborn Drow, Improved Disarm[B], Improved Initiative[B], Improved Feint, Improved Toughness*, Lightning Reflexes[B], Mobility[B], Spring Attack[B], Weapon Focus (longsword)[B], Weapon Specialization (longsword)[B], Whirlwind Attack[B].

*This feat, from *Complete Warrior*, grants Belgos an additional 10 hit points.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 10): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, detect good, detect magic, faerie fire, levitate.*

Possessions: *+1 keen longsword, ring of force shield, ring of protection +1, medallion of thoughts.*

Silussa, female succubus sorcerer 8: CR 12; Medium outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil, tanar'ri); HD 6d8+18 plus 8d4+24; hp 104 (89 without *false life*); Init +3; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +10; Grp +10; Atk +14 melee (1d4+1/18–20, *+1 human bane kukri*); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d4+1/18–20, *+1 human bane kukri*) and +8 melee (1d6, claw); SA energy drain, spells, spell-like abilities, *summon tanar'ri*; SQ damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 18, summon familiar, telepathy 100 ft., tongues; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 34.

Skills: Bluff +29, Concentration +20, Diplomacy +23, Disguise +21 (+23 acting), Escape Artist +12, Hide +12, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +23, Move Silently +12, Search +13, Spellcraft +15, Spot +23.

Feats: Alertness (as long as Miori is in arm's reach), Dodge, Extend Spell, Improved Natural Armor, Mobility, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 12): At will—*charm monster* (DC 26), *detect good*, *detect thoughts* (DC 24), *ethereal jaunt* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *polymorph* (humanoid form only, no limit on duration), *suggestion* (DC 25), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only).

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/9/6/8/6; caster level 8): 0—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 22), *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (+13 melee touch, DC 22); 1st—*grease* (DC 23), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+13 ranged touch), *shield*; 2nd—*false life*, *spectral hand*, *touch of idiocy* (+13 melee touch); 3rd—*haste*, *vampiric touch* (+13 melee touch); 4th—*phantasmal killer* (DC 26).

*Silussa casts an extended *mage armor* on herself and Belgos and a *false life* on herself every day.

Possessions: *+1 human bane kukri*, *ring of counterspells* (*dismissal*), *ring of protection +2*, *armband of Charisma +2* (as *cloak of Charisma +2*, takes up a bracer slot).

Miori, bat familiar: hp 44; *Monster Manual* 268.

Tactics: Belgos and Silussa are a dangerous pair. They open combat using their dominate and *charm monster* powers, attempting to sway the more dangerous PCs to their cause while using spider climb of flight to keep their distance from melee. Silussa casts *haste* on the two before Belgos enters melee. Silussa uses *phantasmal killer* and *spectral hand* with her various touch attacks to continue to fight from range as her lover fights in melee. Belgos fights to the death, since he's confident that he'll be able to escape if the PCs force him into gaseous form. Silussa *teleports* into the pair's hidden cave if brought below 20 hit points, and Belgos retreats soon after such an event. If Belgos assumes gaseous form and escapes through the crack, a PC must use Spot against Belgos's Hide check to see where he went in the misty cave.

Treasure: If the party can find the crevasse on the ledge below (Search DC 25) and then find a way to pass through it to the cave beyond, they find an opulently decorated cavern. The chamber is furnished with thick rugs on the floor, decadent and erotic tapestries, a silk couch, a beautifully wrought coffin, two lounge chairs, a small table, a chest, a wardrobe, and a folding screen. The furniture is of fine quality, and is worth 2,500 gp as a set. Silussa brought it in here one piece at a time by teleportation. An ewer next to the couch is caked with blood; if cleaned it is worth 1,000 gp. The wardrobe contains 12 increasingly scandalous outfits, each worth 250 gp. The chest is unlocked and untrapped, but is empty save for a small silk pouch containing four small sapphires worth 500 gp each. The two are slowly rebuilding their treasure, most of which was stolen from them years ago by the adventurers who killed Silussa and staked Belgos.

5. Surface Emissary (EL 11)

Light from an iron lantern bolted to the ceiling fills this room, but does not spill into the surrounding caves due to the heavy black leather curtains that hang over the entrances. A wooden bed, table, and two chairs sit here, and a trunk rests against the east wall.

The drow use this room to accommodate surface emissaries who happen to visit. The trunk is unlocked and contains fine clothing, personal items, and three heavy coffers that hold the Treasure. A wooden ladder leads from the north alcove up to the trapdoor 10 feet above (see area **3**). The ladder can be moved to access the floor of area 7 below from the ledge.

Creature: Currently inhabiting this room is one of the last surface allies of House Eilservs. His name is Ajakstu, and he's a surviving Slave Lord from the Pomarj. He hopes to reestablish a relationship with the drow in order to rebuild the Slave Lord empire. Despite his relative power, he's survived so far mostly due to his cowardice.

Ajakstu, Slave Lord, male human wizard 11: CR 11; Medium humanoid; HD 11d4; hp 27; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk or Full Atk +8 melee (1d6+3, *staff of power*); SA spells; SQ *contingency* (*dimension door* if brought below 15 hit points), darkvision 60 ft. (granted by *permanency*), summon familiar; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +14, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +12, Forgery +4, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (geography) +7, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +4, Search +6, Sense Motive +10, Sleight of Hand +9, Spellcraft +16, Spot +4.

Feats: Alertness (as long as Nym is in arm's reach), Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Maximize Spell, Negotiator, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjuration).

Languages: Common, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon.

Wizard Spells Prepared (caster level 11): 0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*; 1st—*disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *identify*, *mage armor* (already cast), *magic missile*; 2nd—*alter self*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *Melf's acid arrow* (+8 ranged touch), *mirror image*, *scorching ray* (+8 ranged touch); 3rd—*fireball* (DC 17), *fly*, *magic missile* (maximized), *slow* (DC 17), *summon monster III*; 4th—*dimension door*, *Evard's black tentacles* (grapple check +19), *stoneskin*, *summon monster IV*; 5th—*cone of cold* (DC 19), *summon monster V*; 6th—*invisibility* (quickened).

Spellbook: Ajakstu's actual spellbooks are kept at his distant home, but he does have a traveling spellbook with him that contains all his prepared spells.

Possessions: *Cloak of resistance +2*, *staff of power* (5 charges), *pearl of power* (3rd level), threadbare noble's robes, two vials of diamond dust worth 250 gp each

(spell component for *stoneskin*), statuette worth 1,500 gp (focus for *contingency*), pouch of 34 pp.

Nym, Tiny snake familiar: hp 13; *Monster Manual* 280.

Tactics: If confronted, Ajakstu tries to flee to area 7 for help. If he hears fighting in area 7, he hides beneath his bed and attempts to escape notice in his room. He fights only if cornered, using his spells to slow down and distract the party so he can escape. If attacked in melee he tries to bargain with the PCs, claiming only to be a merchant seeking to establish a lucrative Underdark trade route. If the PCs can adjust his initial hostile attitude to helpful, he'll even be willing to tell them about all the drow on this level—he knows where they live and what their skills are, and warns the PCs to be especially wary of Shahng, but has not yet met Derakhshan. His bravery only comes forward if his staff's safety is threatened; it is his most valued possession, and he'll die before he parts with it. He will not use its final charge.

Treasure: One of the chests is filled with feathers and holds a (nonmagic) crystal ball worth 800 gp. The other two chests each hold 12 gold bricks stamped with the image of a medusa's head; each brick is worth 250 gp. A DC 15 Knowledge (geography or nobility & royalty) check identifies this as the symbol of the Pomarj. This gold is from the Orcish Empire of Turrosh Mak and is intended to bribe the drow into an alliance if necessary. Beneath one chest is Ajakstu's traveling spellbook.

6. Eastern Cavern

This cavern rises 90 feet to the floor level of area 4 above. A Spot or Search check (DC 18) notices hand and footholds carved into the rock of the north wall. These can be climbed with a Climb check (DC 15) to reach area 4 above.

7. Fallen House Eilservs (EL 14)

This high cavern rises to a stalactite-studded ceiling 35 feet overhead. The floor, however, has been cleared of stalagmites. Numerous spur caverns open off the main cavern at different heights.

This chamber serves as a dormitory for the last remnants of House Eilservs. The small caves that open off it once served as apartments for the remaining House nobles, while the common soldiers lived barracks-style in the cavern proper. This was once the most dangerous location within a hundred miles of Istivin, but is now only a shadow of its former self due to attrition from the war against the Malgoth.

Creatures: The central cavern is occupied by four drow soldiers and their trained displacer beasts, all that remains of an elite fighting force (with the exception of a few patrols that might have already been encountered during the subterranean journey to Mirith Glarnon). These drow pass the time drilling with their weapons or training the displacer beasts, taking pains not to annoy the increasingly agitated Shahng, an exiled drow noble who lives nearby.

The side caverns off of this chamber are currently empty, save the easternmost one on the south wall, which serves as Shahng's personal quarters. The Weapons Master of House Eilservs and the last surviving noble other than Derakhshan, Shahng's fighting style was unique in the Vault of the Drow, and she was both widely known and feared. Now, forced to share living space with common soldiers and with Derakhshan's plans to infiltrate Istivin slowly collapsing, she's grown ever more disappointed and frustrated with her lot in life.

Drow house soldiers, male and female drow ranger 3/fighter 2 (4): CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8+6 plus 2d10+4; hp 34 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d8+2/19–20, *+1 longsword*) or +9 ranged (1d4 plus poison/19–20, masterwork hand crossbow); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+2/19–20, *+1 longsword*) and +5 melee (1d6+1/19–20, *+1 short sword*) or +9 ranged (1d4 plus poison/19–20, masterwork hand crossbow); SA favored enemy (human) +2, spell-like abilities, two-weapon combat style; SQ darkvision 120 ft., spell resistance 16, wild empathy +5; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +2 (+4 against spells and spell-like effects); Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +6, Hide +8, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +8, Ride +5, Spot +9, Survival +7 (+9 underground).

Feats: Endurance[B], Highborn Drow, Quick Draw, Track[B], Two-Weapon Defense[B], Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (longsword)[B].

Languages: Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 5): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, detect good, detect magic, faerie fire, levitate.*

Possessions: Masterwork chain shirt, *+1 longsword, +1 short sword*, masterwork hand crossbow with 10 poisoned bolts (DC 13, unconsciousness/unconsciousness for 2d4 hours), vial of drow poison (2 doses), *potion of cure light wounds.*

Displacer Beasts (4): hp 51 each; *Monster Manual* 66.

Shahng, Eilservs weapons master, female drow swashbuckler 3/fighter 4/dervish 5: CR 13; Medium humanoid; HD 12d10; hp 66; Init +6; Spd 40 ft.; AC 31, touch 25, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +12; Grp +13; Atk +15 melee (1d6+8/15–20, *+1 keen scimitar*) or +19 ranged (1d4 plus poison/19–20, masterwork hand crossbow); Full Atk +13/+8/+3 melee (1d6+8/15–20, *+1 keen scimitar*) and +13/+8 melee (1d6+6/18–20, *+1 defending scimitar*) or +19 ranged (1d4 plus poison/19–20, masterwork hand crossbow); SA dance of death, dervish dance 3/day, insightful strike; SQ darkvision 120 ft., dervish AC bonus, fast movement +10, grace +1, movement mastery, slashing blades, spell resistance 23; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +13, Will +5 (+7 against spells and spell-like effects); Str 13, Dex 22, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +19, Bluff +7, Climb +11, Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +3, Jump +22, Listen +11, Perform (dance) +16, Sense Motive +5, Spot +1, Tumble +21.

Feats: Combat Expertise[B], Dodge, Highborn Drow, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Mobility, Spring Attack[B], Weapon Finesse[B], Weapon Focus (scimitar)[B], Weapon Specialization (scimitar)[B], Two-Weapon Fighting.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Terran, Undercommon.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 12): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, detect good, detect magic, faerie fire, levitate.*

Dance of Death (Ex): Shahng gains the benefit of the Cleave feat while performing a dervish dance. She does not have to move 5 feet before making the extra attack granted by this ability.

Dervish AC Bonus (Ex): Shahng gains a +2 dodge bonus to her Armor Class when not encumbered by gear or armor.

Dervish Dance (Ex): As a free action Shahng can enter a dervish dance for 7 rounds. During this dance, she can take a full attack action (with melee attacks only) and still move up to her speed. She must move a minimum of 5 feet between each attack, and cannot return to a square she just exited (though she may return to that square later during her full attack). She is subject to attacks of opportunity while dancing, but may tumble normally as part of her move. If prevented from completing her move, she is also prevented from finishing her full attack. She gains a +3 bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls with slashing weapons while dervish dancing. She must be wielding a slashing weapon while performing a dervish dance, and must also be unencumbered. While dancing, she cannot use skills or abilities that involve concentration or require her to stand still, but she can use Combat Expertise. At the end of her dance, she becomes fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Fast Movement (Ex): Shahng gains a +10 ft. enhancement bonus to her speed when not encumbered by gear or armor.

Grace (Ex): Shahng gains a +1 competence bonus on Reflex saves as long as she doesn't wear medium or heavy armor, doesn't carry a shield, and isn't carrying a medium or heavy load.

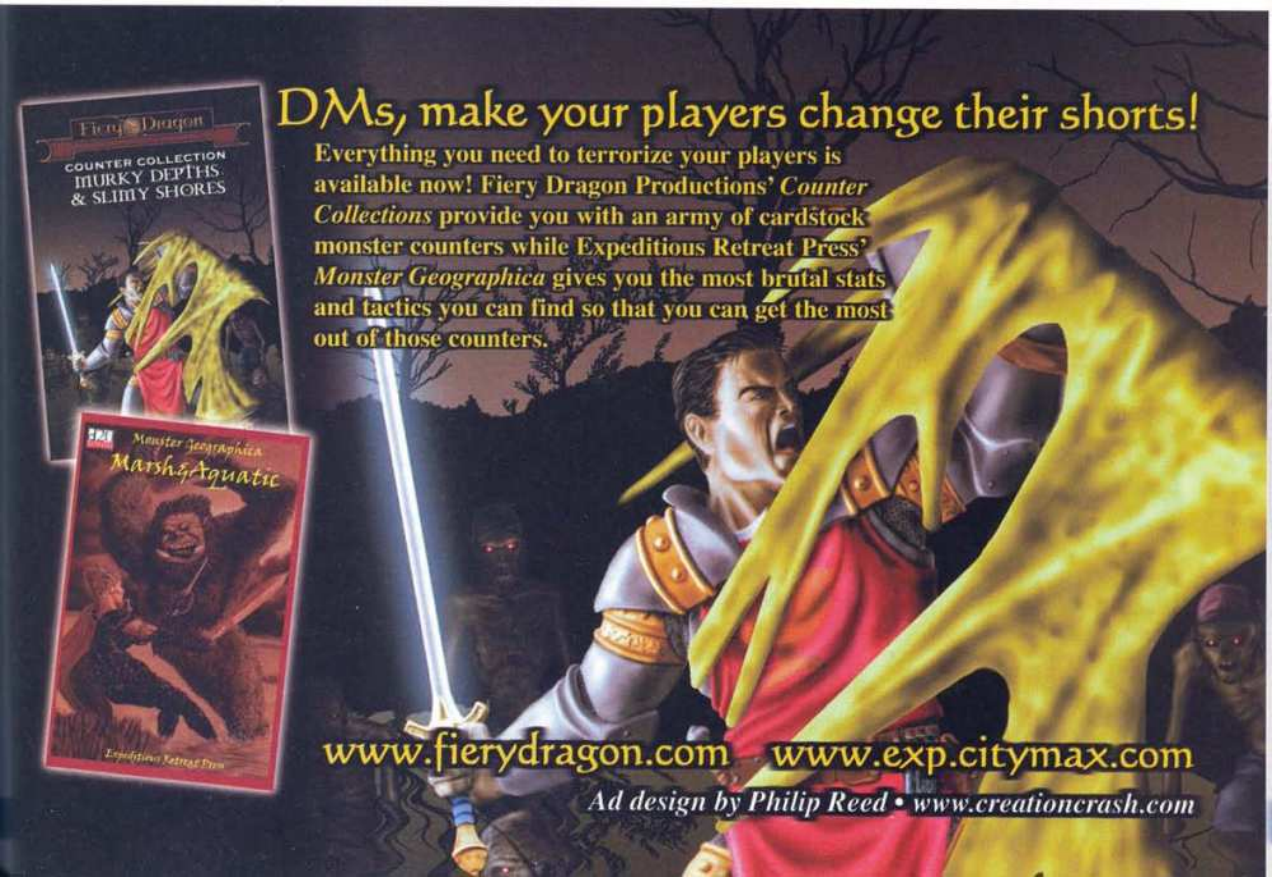
Insightful Strike (Ex): Shahng applies her Intelligence bonus as a bonus on damage rolls with any light weapon. Targets immune to sneak attacks or critical hits are immune to this extra damage. She cannot use this ability when wearing medium or heavy armor or carrying a medium or heavy load.

Movement Mastery (Ex): Shahng can take 10 on Jump, Perform (dance), and Tumble checks even if stress and distraction would normally prevent her from doing so.

Slashing Blades (Ex): Shahng treats the scimitar as a light weapon.

Possessions: *+2 studded leather armor, +1 keen scimitar, +1 defending scimitar,* masterwork hand crossbow with 10 poisoned bolts (DC 13, unconsciousness/unconsciousness for 2d4 hours), *gloves of Dexterity +2, headband of intellect +2, amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1,* two *potions of cure serious wounds,* two *potions of haste,* platinum ring set with fire opals worth 1,000 gp, gold necklace with rubies worth 1,500 gp, platinum ear spools worth 100 gp, electrum arm circlet worth 125 gp.

Note: The swashbuckler class and dervish prestige class are detailed in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Complete Warrior, but all the rules needed to run this encounter are included in Shahng's stat block.

Tactics: If the drow know the PCs are nearby, they prepare for their arrival by hiding in the western half of the cave. They fire crossbows at the PCs in the first round of combat as the displacer beasts charge the intruders. The drow then charge into melee against the PCs, fighting to the death.

Shahng starts combat by drinking a *potion of haste*. She then activates her dervish dance and races in to attack the PCs. In combat, Shahng uses Combat Expertise to full effect and uses her +1 bonus from her *defending longsword* to aid her Armor Class as well; these bonuses are included in the stat block above. While dervish dancing, she tries to make as many attacks on the same group of PCs as she can, ending her action by jumping into one of the side caves. She repeats this tactic each round, forcing the PCs to take move actions to engage her in melee or gaining partial or complete cover from ranged attacks made from within the room. If reduced to 15 or fewer hit points, Shahng tries to flee to Derakhshan's chambers; if she cannot, she surrenders to the PCs.

Treasure: Most of the side caves are eerily empty now. Only Shahng's holds any personal effects, which include a bedroll and a backpack holding her personal treasure of 50 pp, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, and a *potion of jump*. The main cavern has 18 bedrolls for the drow here and others who are out patrolling the surrounding Underdark. Mixed in with their personal possessions are a total of 150 gp. Stacked against the west wall are crates of supplies taken from Istivin.

Development: Shahng has grown disappointed with her situation, and as the last female noble of the exiled drow, has almost decided to abandon Derakhshan and his doomed plan to seek her fortune elsewhere. Although cruel and sadistic, she could make a valuable ally if the PCs accept her surrender. She knows the layout of Mirith Glarnon quite well, and can tell her new allies about the guardians of the lower caverns and the pit as well as the dangers of the altar in area **15**. If the PCs are having a tough time in Mirith Glarnon, you can use Shahng to support them and give advice. If the PCs are doing well, you can have her betray them at a critical moment (preferably after she's convinced the PCs to expend some healing on her).

8. Slippery Ledge

A five-foot-wide slightly sloped ledge hugs the eastern wall of this cavern, its surface slick with moisture and mold. A vast cavern opens to the southwest of the ledge, dropping away into darkness below.

The opening to the southwest leads down to area **11**, 50 feet below. The slippery mold and moisture on the ledge make walking along it quite dangerous. Navigating the ledge this way requires a DC 15 Balance check, with a failure of 5 or more indicating a fall into area **11**.

Development: If the demon in area **11** hears the PCs or spots any light sources up here, it flies up to investigate. It uses its fear aura and drone attacks against anyone it finds here. If any PCs fall into area **11**, the demon pauses to finish off anything that survived the fall before flying up to continue the battle.

9. Second Descent (EL 12)

The tunnel exits onto a ledge in a shaft reaching 50 feet above and 60 feet below. A set of handholds carved into the wall allows creatures to clamber down into area **10** below with a successful DC 15 Climb check.

Creature: A roper guards this passage, clinging to a narrow ledge alongside the ladder 15 feet below the tunnel opening. An ally of Derakhshan, it attacks anyone it doesn't recognize as a proper denizen of Mirith Glarnon. If it hits with a strand, it allows the victim to fall into area **10** below before it begins reeling in its dinner.

Roper: hp 85; *Monster Manual* 215.

10. Shaft Base

The shaft from area **9** above ends in this small cavern. Characters who enter this cave without having dealt with the roper 45 feet above in area **9** quickly find they are in range of its strand attacks.

11. Chasm of the Chasme (EL 10)

The ceiling of this barren cavern arches up to a ledge high above. Two large holes in the floor drop down to another cavern below, from which a foul stench rises. The western end of the long cavern is awash in darkness.

Both of the holes in the floor lead to area **16** after a drop of 100 feet. The darkness to the west is detailed in area **12**.

Creature: The greatest danger in this cavern is an insectlike demon called a chasme. It normally hovers in the central hole in the floor, where it takes 10 on Listen checks for anyone entering area **11** or for sounds of fighting in area **8**. A chasme resembles a large, bloated, flylike demon with tufts of hair sprouting from its flesh, large wings, four legs, and two humanlike arms. Its head is vaguely humanoid with a long, hooked proboscis. It is completely loyal to Derakhshan and keeps no treasure.

Zzylyzz, Chasme Demon: CR 10; Large outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil, tanar'ri); HD 9d8+36; hp 76; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +9; Grp +17; Atk +10 melee (2d6+6, claw with 2-point Power Attack); Full Atk +10 melee (2d6+6, 2 claws with 2-point Power Attack) and +8 melee (1d6+4, gore with 2-point Power Attack) and +8 melee (1d6+4, bite with 2-point Power Attack); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA drone, fear aura, spell-like abilities, *summon tanar'ri*, wounding; SQ damage reduction 10/good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 23, telepathy 100 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14; *Book of Vile Darkness* 174.

Skills: Concentration +16, Hide +11, Intimidate +14, Listen +14, Move Silently +15, Search +14, Spot +14, Survival +8.

Feats: Flyby Attack, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Multiattack, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic.

Drone (Su): As a full-round action, a chasme can beat its wings to a create a droning buzz in a 60-foot spread. Each creature in the area must make a Will save (DC 16) or fall asleep for 2d10 rounds. Demons and creatures immune to *sleep* effects are immune to this effect.

Fear Aura (Su): As a free action, a chasme can create an aura of fear in a 5-foot radius. The effect is identical to a *fear* spell (caster level 10; Will DC 16 negates). If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected by that chasme's fear aura for 24 hours.

Wounding (Ex): Wounds from a chasme's attacks bleed for an additional 1 point of damage per round thereafter. Multiple wounds result in cumulative bleeding loss. The bleeding can be stopped with a Heal check (DC 10) or magical healing.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp): Once per day a chasme can attempt to summon 1d4 rutterkins (*Book of Vile Darkness* 170) or 1 chasme with a 40% chance of success.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 10): At will—*contagion* (DC 15), *darkness*, *deeper darkness*, *desecrate*, *detect good*, *dispel magic*, *fly*, *insect plague*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+11 ranged touch), *protection from good*, *see invisibility*, *telekinesis* (DC 17), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of gear only), *wave of grief** (DC 14); 1/day—*circle of nausea** (DC 13), *unholy aura* (DC 20).

*These spells are detailed in *Book of Vile Darkness*.

12. Leap of Faith

A globe of *deeper darkness* (caster level 15) covers this area and a hole opening into area **14** below. This effect is permanent and is identical to the spell, save for the area of effect. Anyone walking into the *deeper darkness* may not see the hole in the floor. A successful Spot check (DC 20) is good enough to notice the hole, otherwise a successful DC 20 Reflex save is all that stands between the creature and a 100-foot fall into area **14**.

13. Derakhshan's Sanctum (EL 15)

This cave has a deep black rug and black wall hangings obscuring the rock walls.

The pungent smell of strange incense fills the air. In place of a bed is a single sheet of wood lying on the floor, its surface covered with bits of metal, bone, and glass. Dark bloodstains cover this horrid plank. A barbed whip hangs from the wall next to the sleeping platform. A cylinder of black stone caked with sticky dark bloodstains stands in the center of the room.

This cavern is Derakhshan's personal quarters. A powerful cleric of the Elder Elemental Eye and a great believer in the infliction of pain and self-torture, the terrible board of nails serves him as a bed. Anyone lying on the bed has a 50% chance of being dealt 1d2 hit points of damage each hour. The bloodstained stone cylinder is Derakhshan's magical strongbox. Unless broken open, the seamless cylinder can only be breached by placing an ungloved hand atop it. This causes a blade to spring forth into the hand (+20 melee), dealing 1d6+2 points of damage. The blade deals an additional 1d6 damage to lawful targets, and an additional 1d6 damage to good targets. If the creature stabbed by this blade bleeds on the box, the top of the cylinder becomes ethereal for 5 minutes, revealing a hollow area inside. The cylinder contains Derakhshan's Treasure.

Magical strongbox: Hardness 8; hp 120; Break DC 28.

Creatures: Unless Shahng or another inhabitant of Mirith Glarnon has come to warn him, Derakhshan lurks in this room. This drow is coldly beautiful in an androgynous way. Once a consort of Eclavdra, it was he who sold out his former mistress after a vision warned him of the coming destruction of House Eilservs. Derakhshan wears an ochre velvet robe festooned with humanoid teeth attached like sequins in an inverted "Y" symbol. An adamantine helm covered with flayed skin serves as his headpiece, and he pulls a leathery faceguard composed of the skin of an elven face into place when preparing for combat. The center two fingers of his left hand have been removed, and in their place a hollow bone dagger graft loaded with poison has been attached. This graft does not impede Derakhshan's spellcasting.

Derakhshan, male drow cleric 14: CR 15; Medium humanoid; HD 14d8+42; hp 105 (currently 98 from self-inflicted wounds); Init +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +10; Grp +11 (+9 with *lesser tentacle rod*); Atk +9 melee (6, 3 tentacles from *lesser tentacle rod*); Full Atk +9 melee (6, 3 tentacles from *lesser tentacle rod*) or +14/+9 (1d4+4 plus poison/×3, *+3 handspur graft*); SA poison, rebuke undead, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 2/—, darkvision 120 ft., masochism, spell resistance 26; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +15; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 22, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +2, Concentration +13, Craft (alchemy) +9, Diplomacy +9, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Spellcraft +14.

Feats: Craft Rod, Craft Wondrous Item, Highborn Drow, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (necromancy).

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Elven, Undercommon.

Masochism (Ex): Derakhshan gains a +4 circumstance bonus on saving throws against pain effects. If he ever takes 14 or more points of damage in a round, he gains a +1 circumstance bonus on attack and damage rolls, skill checks, and saving throws for the next round.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 14): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, detect good, detect magic, faerie fire, levitate.*

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 14): 0—*detect poison, guidance, cure minor wounds, light, virtue* (2); 1st—*bane* (DC 17), *cure light wounds* (2), *divine favor, doom* (DC 18), *protection from law*[D], *sanctuary* (DC 17), *shield of faith*; 2nd—*aid, cure moderate wounds* (2), *death knell* (DC 19), *hold person* (DC 18), *shatter*[D] (DC 18), *silence* (DC 18), *spiritual weapon* (+16 ranged); 3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 20), *cure serious wounds, dispel magic, invisibility purge, obscure object, stone shape*[D]; 4th—*divine power, cure critical wounds* (2), *greater magic weapon* (already cast on *handspur*), *sending, spike stones*[D] (DC 20); 5th—*dispel law*[D], *flame strike* (DC 21), *righteous might, slay living* (2) (DC 22); 6th—*blade barrier* (DC 22), *harm* (DC 23), *heal, stoneskin*[D], *word of recall*; 7th—*destruction* (DC 24), *greater scrying, word of chaos*[D].

D: Domain Spell. Domains: Chaos (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Earth (rebuke, command, or bolster earth creatures as an evil cleric rebukes undead 7 times per day).

Possessions: +2 adamantine breastplate, +2 buckler, handspur (loaded with 6 doses of purple worm poison), *lesser tentacle rod, periapt of wisdom +4, bracers of health +4, mask of pallid ruin, potion of cure serious wounds*, 3 vials of diamond dust worth 250 gp each (components for *stoneskin* spells).

Tactics: If Derakhshan is aware that the party is coming, he casts *stoneskin* on himself. He then greets the party politely and offers them a truce. If Shahng has retreated to his side with reports of the PCs killing several drow in the caves above, Derakshan instead prepares for battle. In combat, he fights with an unpredictable combination of melee attacks and spells, and takes great pains to remain close to his enemies not only to maximize his attacks but in a perverse hope that they'll score some particularly painful hits on himself. When fighting in melee, Derakshan holds his *lesser tentacle rod* in his off hand, alternating between its three attacks and his *handspur*.

If reduced below 50 hit points, Derakshan casts *sanctuary* to give him time to cast healing spells on himself, and then uses *blade barrier* to split the party. If reduced to below 30 hit points, he uses *word of recall* to retreat behind the altar in area **15** to prepare a final stand there.

Treasure: Kept within Derakhshan's stone cylinder is a tattered tome entitled *Book of the Dark Eye*. Written in Abyssal, this tome details the worship of the Elder Elemental Eye and how to operate the black stone altar in area **15** in conjunction with the tentacle rod. The cylinder also holds the last treasures of the exiled House Eilservs—a divine scroll (caster level 18th; *greater restoration, true resurrection, unholy word*), two *potions of rage*, a potion of *greater magic fang +4*, *a ring of wizardry (I)*, a bejeweled platinum tiara worth 1,500 gp, two ingots of adamantine worth 3,500 gp (each capable of making one weapon or two for one breastplate or shield), and a sack of 4,000 gp minted in Erelhei-Cinlu.

Developments: If the PCs agree to parley, Derakshan attempts to convince them that the drow have no designs on Istivin save to destroy their age-old enemy, the Malgoth. The party can make Sense Motive checks opposed by his Bluff (he gains a +5 circumstance bonus on his Bluff check due to the elements of truth woven into his story) to discern that he isn't quite telling the whole truth. If the party asks about Ilkharis, he

Derakshan's Magic

Handspur

A *handspur* appears as a punch dagger made of bone, but instead of a handle, the weapon has a writhing, lamprey-like stalk. If handled with bare flesh, the *handspur* immediatley makes a +5 touch attack against its target. If it hits, the lamprey mouth immediately bites off the two middle fingers of the victim's hand and burrows into his arm to latch onto arteries deep inside. This inflicts 1d4 points of damage and 2 points of Constitution damage. The blade-like spur protrudes from the bloody stump. Once in place, a *handspur* functions as a punch dagger that cannot be disarmed. The *handspur* itself is not technically a creature, despite its organic appearance. It is merely a strange form of magic weaponry that has fallen out of style amongst most drow.

As long as a *handspur* is in place, the wearer suffers a –2 penalty on Disable Device, Forgery, Open Lock, and Sleight of Hand checks. It does not impact spellcasting. All *handspurs* are considered to be masterowrk punch daggers, although they can be further crafted to gain enhancement bonuses or other weapon qualities. A *handspur* can store up to six doses of poison; it injects a victim with one dose each time it deals damage to a target. There is no chance of suffering accidental poisoning while loading a *handspur* with venom.

Faint conjuration; CL 5th, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *animate objects*; Price 500 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Lesser Tentacle Rod

This appears to be a long, sinuous rod of organic composition. It ends in three dangling branches. Upon command, these branches animate and grapple like tentacles, using their own +9 attack bonus rather than the wielder's bonus. A successful hit deals 6 points of bludgeoning damage. The rod's attack counts as a standard action for the wielder.

The tentacle attacks follow all the normal rules for grapple attacks, with two exceptions: These attacks don't incur attacks of opportunity and the wielder need not move into the target's space to maintain the grapple. The tentacle, and not the wielder, is considered the grappler (and the wielder doesn't suffer any of the drawbacks of being the grappler).

If all three of the rod's tentacles touch a target in the same round (regardless of whether the grapple was successful or not), the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be affected by a *slow* spell for 12 rounds.

The rod has a +3 enhancement bonus and a 16 Strength. Each tentacle has hardness 10, 20 hp, and a break DC of 30.

Strong conjuration and transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Rod, *animate objects, Evard's black tentacles, slow*; Price 21,000 gp; Weight 3 lb.

Mask of Pallid Ruin

This wretched mask is made from bleached skin harvested from the face of surface elves. While not itself an intrinsically evil item, it is foul and unnerving to look upon for most elves. As long as it is worn, the wearer gains a +1 insight bonus on all melee weapon attack rolls and damage rolls made against elves. Once per day, if it has been worn for at least 1 hour, the mask's wearer can generate a *phantasmal killer*, as the spell. Elves suffer a –2 penalty to save against the effects of this *phantasmal killer*.

Moderate illusion; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *phantasmal killer*; Price 14,000.

gladly gives them access to the giant, claiming that he traded with the giants for the old cleric for precisely this reason: to learn more about the Malgoth. If the party falls for the ruse, he lets them talk to Ilkharis and sends them on their way hoping they destroy the Malgoth or at least weaken it. Either way, he intends to betray them at some later date. If the party refuses to bargain, admits they've killed Shahng, or discovers the temple in area **15**, Derakhshan gives up any pretense at peace and attacks.

14. The Foyer (EL 7)

This tall cavern is empty save for a dark pit in the room's center. This pit is actually the entrance to area **15** and is guarded by a Trap. A powerful stench emanates from the southeast passage, and the sound of combat in here draws the umber hulks from area **16** in 1d4 rounds.

Trap: The pit leading to area **15** is guarded by a *greater glyph of warding* that is triggered by anyone who passes through the opening without uttering the password: "Eclavdra."

Glyph of Warding (blast): CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*greater glyph of warding [blast]*, 14th-level cleric, 7d8 acid, DC 22 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

15. Dark Altar (EL Variable)

This room has a cold, eerie feeling that seems to seep from the walls and floor. Worn wooden benches are arranged in rows facing southeast. At that end of the cavern is a large, black stone altar, flanked by two candelabras fitted with five fat black candles each. A large kettledrum sits on the floor behind the altar.

The only entrance to this chamber is the hole in the ceiling from area **14**. If Derakhshan is here, the candelabra is lit and glowing with purple flames, and he will have touched the altar, causing its transformation (see below). As soon as anyone enters he beats the drum.

This chamber is a fully functional temple of the Elder Elemental Eye, a cult nearly eradicated during the Lolth-purge of the Vault of the Drow. The room is under the effects of an *unhallow* spell that grants all evil beings in the room *protection from good* and *death ward* as a 14th-level caster.

If touched, the black altar becomes translucent over the course of 3 rounds, slowly turning amethyst with an amorphous black center. Anyone touching it in this state is paralyzed (Fort save DC 18 negates) for 1d4 hours. If the candelabra are lit and the drum is sounded, a glowing golden eye shimmers into being at the stone's center. Anyone viewing the eye who isn't a worshiper of the Elder Elemental Eye must make a Will save (DC 20) or suffer one of the following fates:

01–05	Death
06–20	1d2 negative levels
21–40	Permanent *confusion*
41–60	1d3 Wisdom drain
61–80	2d6 Strength damage
81–100	1d6 Constitution damage

If a *tentacle rod* is present when the eye appears, the altar's color becomes a transparent heliotrope with the black mass at the center growing larger and showing swollen veins of purple. The eye becomes a fiery red-orange. A tentacle writhes out of the altar and grabs the nearest living creature in front of or above the altar (behind the altar is relatively safe unless there are no other targets) and attempts to pull it into the stone (Atk +25, Grp +29, reach 20 ft.). The tentacle cannot be destroyed, but if it misses its target, or its target escapes being grappled, it withdraws back into the stone. A grappled creature is drawn into the altar and completely destroyed (no save), as if by a *destruction* spell. After this happens, the altar once again becomes black and opaque, and the possessor of the *tentacle rod* is granted a single magical effect equal in power to a *wish* spell (caster level 20).

It is through use of this altar that Derakhshan gave his drow spies the supernatural ability to use *alter self* to mimic the citizen they replaced. It is also how he created the permanent *deeper darkness* in area **12** and how he protects the inhabitants of Mirith Glarnon from scrying.

Altar of the Elder Elemental Eye: Hardness 12; hp 100; AC 5; break DC 30.

Treasure: The masterwork candelabra and drum are of brass and are worth 100 gp each. Each of the ten candles is magical and burns with a purple flame but will never burn down. They are worth 20 gp each.

Development: If the PCs confront Derakhshan here, the candles are lit. Derakhshan's first action is to touch the altar while beating the drum to awaken the Elder Elemental Eye. If a PC is dragged into the altar and Derakhshan sill carries his *tentacle rod*, he uses the *wish* granted by the Elder Elemental Eye to duplicate an 8th-level wizard spell to use against the party (likely choices include *mass charm monster, horrid wilting, maze,* or *summon monster VIII*).

Ad-Hoc XP Award: If the party battles Derakhshan in this hostile environment, award 150% XP if he is defeated.

16. Hulk Hole (EL 12)

This filthy cavern is strewn with bones, rubble, and offal, much of which seems to have been piled into disgusting nests. The ceiling above arches up for about 100 feet before opening into another cavern above.

The opening above leads into area **11**.

Creatures: This disgusting cave is the lair of six umber hulks allied with Derakhshan. He's asked them to serve as guards for the prison in area **17**, and in return he feeds them regularly. The hulks find the arrangement to be quite comfortable, and do their best to prevent anyone they don't recognize from passing through this cave in any direction.

Umber Hulks (6): hp 71 each; *Monster Manual* 249.

17. Prison Pits

This dank chamber lies at the farthest reaches of Mirith Glarnon's pits. Large boulders block off side caverns where the drow store prisoners who may still have some use. Each boulder weighs about 2,500 lb. and thus requires a minimum Strength of 22 to drag aside (the drow rely on an umber hulk from area **16** to open and close the caves). Each prison cave is a tiny, cramped space no more than 3 feet high and stale with the stench of unwashed bodies, excrement, and death. Currently there are five humans sealed in these caves (two are in the northernmost cave). All are malnourished and sick. These are nobles and city leaders of Istivin who had been replaced by the drow. If returned to their homes above, these prisoners can provide the PCs with additional rewards as you desire. If you are running "Wrath of the Abyss" as a stand-alone adventure, Algorthas's friend Tyrell Palsidarian is imprisoned in one of these caves.

18. The Pit of Ilkharis

The stench of death is strong at the edge of this pit. The floor falls away to a rough bottom ten feet below. Huddled against the far wall is a twitching figure. Emaciated to the point of being skeletal, its gray skin is stretched tight over its bones. A few wisps of stringy blond hair remain on a large head marred by blotchy patches of diseased blue flesh and charred and blistered burn marks. The ragged intake of a shallow breath indicates that he still lives, but only just.

Creature: This is, of course, Ilkharis, taken by the drow after they learned of his part in creating the Malgoth's hold over Istivin. They have spent some time torturing him for information regarding any weaknesses the Malgoth might have, but so far they haven't learned anything truly helpful.

Once a powerful cleric of the Abyssal power Kostchtchie, Ilkharis is now a shadow of his former self. Too weak to stand and barely able to move at all, the sickly giant is now paying dearly for a life of demonic servitude. In his travels, he visited places better left to the imagination. After years of exposure to harmful radiations and essences within the Abyss he has contracted a horrid wasting disease, Abyssal in origin, that defies all healing. A *miracle* or *wish* might be enough to save him, but such magic is beyond his reach and since he hasn't made a whole lot of friends in his lifetime, he seems doomed to waste away.

Spending the last few weeks in wretched confinement has given Ilkharis time to reflect upon his misspent life. He has finally realized that neither Kostchtchie nor the Malgoth value him enough to save him, and he has lost all spellcasting ability due to his lost faith. Now, the only thing that keeps him alive is a nearly blinding thirst for vengeance against the Abyssal powers that have used and discarded him in his time of need.

As a result, Ilkharis is willing to cooperate with the party. He can relate much of the information given in the adventure background. He can further relate that the key to the Malgoth's hold on the city is Galmoor's corpse, which was absorbed into the ground at the center of the city's square when Ilkharis bound the Malgoth to the Material Plane. If his corpse were exhumed and destroyed, the Malgoth would be forced to manifest physically for a short time in order to anchor its essence to a new focus. During this time, it would be vulnerable to magic and even physical attacks. Ilkharis has refused to give this information to the drow only because he hates them as much (or more) than his former Abyssal patrons.

Ilkharis asks only one favor in return for the aid he provides to the PCs. Fearful of becoming a bodak after his death due to the nature of his illness, he asks only for a *consecrate* spell to be cast upon his corpse, because he believes that might prevent such a transformation from occurring. Once he has extracted this promise from a PC and imparted what information he has to give, Ilkharis smiles and closes his eyes, releasing the feeble hold he has maintained on life for now. It is up to the characters whether or not they follow through with his request; if they do not, he does indeed arise as a 27-HD bodak 24 hours later. It's up to you if the bodak seeks out the PCs for revenge.

Ilkharis, dying male frost giant cleric 10: hp 0; *Monster Manual* 122.

Ad-Hoc XP Award: If the party obtains the information Ilkharis has and complies with his last request, they should gain XP as if they had defeated a CR 14 creature.

CHAPTER THREE: RETURN TO ISTIVIN

Once the PCs have learned from Ilkharis how to defeat the Malgoth, they'll need to make their way back to Istivin. If they don't have access to teleportation magic, they can either return the way they came via the Oestral Abyss, or they can attempt to navigate the Underdark tunnels between area **4** and Istivin's sewers. There's no one true route to follow, unlike the route between area **1** and the Oestral Abyss, unfortunately, so if the PCs opt for this route, feel free to have them encounter numerous monsters and hazards along the way.

In the party's absence, the Malgoth has not been idle. It knows that drow resources have grown thin, and has expended great amounts of its carefully nurtured power to begin its final conquest of Istivin. The city

now hangs under a dark gray fog-like pall as the Malgoth exerts its influence over the structures of the city. All doors and windows are locked, trapping the citizenry within their homes and businesses. Those who manage to escape a building either return quickly with tales of shadowy monsters lurching through the city's streets, or do not return at all.

The military and city watch have been trapped within their garrisons and citadels, and as such are unable to effectively combat the Malgoth's minions directly. The forces of Krelont Keep are locked in a desperate war in the Deeper Dungeons, where they face an invasion of fanatical troglodytes come to answer the Malgoth's call.

The PCs should arrive in Istivin a day or two after these events have begun. The pall of shadow lurking over the city reduces visibility to 120 ft., even at noon. The streets are silent and empty, and knocks on doors are met only with muted curses and soft shuffling. No one trusts anyone on the streets anymore.

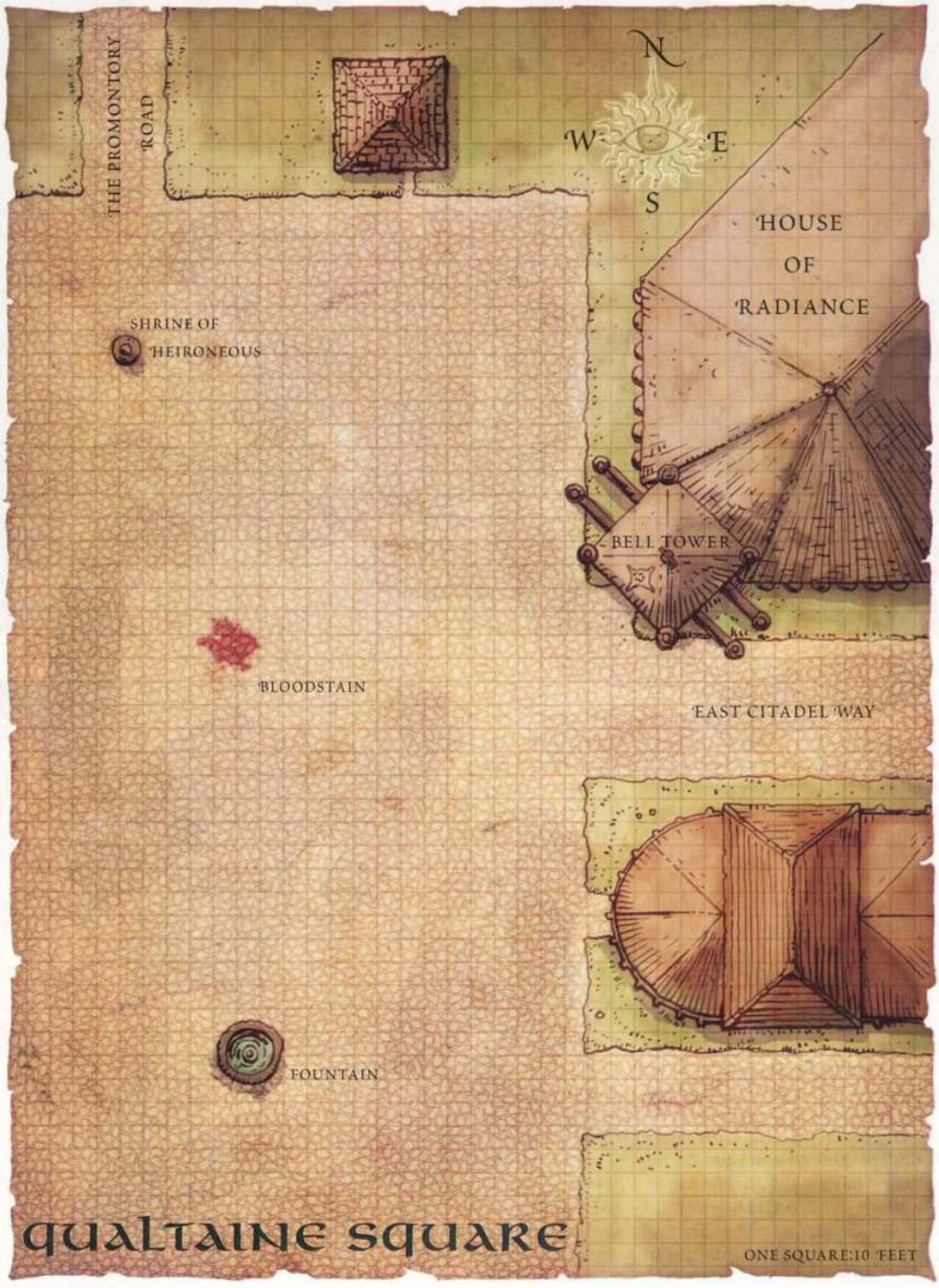
This adventure assumes that the PCs proceed directly to Qualtaine Square, where Ilkharis has directed them to excavate Galmoor's body. If the PCs tarry in Istivin, they should grow more and more wary as the feeling of oppression grows. Eventually, groups of greater shadows, 12-HD shadow mastiffs, shadow demons (page 172 of the *Book of Vile Darkness*), and slow shadows (page 104 of *DUNGEON* #112) assault them at every turn.

Entering Istivin

Unless the party teleports directly into Istivin, they should immediately note the strange, shadowy pall that looms over the city, and the deserted condition of its walls and gates. Those that could escape have fled the city, and all of the soldiers and watchmen were recalled to their headquarters to defend the city internally, and are now locked inside their barracks. The city gates stand wide open as the Malgoth sends out a silent summons to Ilkharis to lead his giants on a new invasion of the city. Of course,

Key to the City of Istivin

1. Javan Gate
2. Brink's Gate
3. Trade Gate
4. East Citadel
5. West Citadel
6. Krelont Keep
7. The House of Tabard (shabby inn)
8. The Gryphon's Arms (expensive inn)
9. House of Radiance (Pelor)
10. The Gilded House (Zilchus)
11. The Maiden's Shield (Mayaheine)
12. The Tower of Custom (Allitur)
13. Algorthas the Seer's Manor
14. Barclay House
15. The Old Livery
16. Qualtaine Square
17. The Effluvium
18. Chapterhouse of the Star
19. The Circus
20. Oliphant House (vacant demense)
21. Ancient Stone Circle
22. The Fiddling Viceroy (standard inn)
23. The Dwarven Court
24. Shrine (Ehlonna)
25. North Square
26. Temple (Fharlanghn)
27. Temple (Heironeous)
28. Temple (Ulaa)
29. Gate Square


THE PROMONTORY ROAD
N
W
E
S
HOUSE OF RADIANCE
SHRINE OF HEIRONEOUS
BELL TOWER
BLOODSTAIN
EAST CITADEL WAY
FOUNTAIN
qualtaine square
ONE SQUARE:10 FEET

unbeknownst to the Malgoth, Ilkharis is now beyond his reach.

If the characters enter the city via the Javan Gate, allow them a DC 20 Spot check as they enter. Success indicates they notice something that is in plain sight but is so obvious it is easy to miss—the great granite cornerstone of the center gate tower is smooth and devoid of feature. It no longer bears the carven forms of the great wolves whose images were once captured in its stone.

Qualtaine Square (EL 13)

All of the great temples of Istivin abut the central square. The pathway up to Krelont Keep ascends from the square's north end. Two graceful fountains mark its southern end, and a marble shrine to Heironeous stands before the road rising to the keep as if guarding the ruling family. A DC 10 Spot check at the center of the square notes a large dark stain on the cobbles. This is where Ilkharis has told the PCs to exhume the giant's body. Galmoor's remains lie under 8 feet of hard-packed earth, but the square is covered in huge flagstones that must be somehow circumvented before any actual digging begins. Though the characters are unlikely to have any digging tools, this is probably not much of a hindrance for a party of this level. A greater hindrance are the Malgoth's guardians.

Creatures: As the party arrives in the square, a faint baying echoes through the silence of the city. Three rounds later, bounding from shadowy alleyways come four massive, black-furred wolves with eyes of green fire and tongues of licking green flames. These creatures are the statues that once decorated Javan Gate, now animated by the Malgoth. They focus their attacks on PCs attempting to excavate in the square.

These huge outsiders are equivalent in all ways to Nessian warhounds except their alignment is chaotic evil, they look like wolves, and they don't wear chain barding. Due to their natural armor bonus of +13, however, they share the same Armor Class as Nessian warhounds.

Wolves of Javan Gate (4): hp 114 each; *Monster Manual* 152.

Unearthing Galmoor (EL 14)

As the PCs' excavation nears the 8-foot mark, allow a Spot check (DC 20) to notice movement in the dirt at the bottom of the pit... movement coming from below. Success grants the PCs enough time to each take one standard action before Galmoor's body, infused with the Malgoth's rage and horribly animate, rises up from its grave.

Creature: After Galmoor was sacrificed, the Malgoth absorbed the body into the ground and used it as a sort of phylactery for its essence as it cemented its hold over Istivin. As a result, the giant's body has transformed into a massive mohrg that animates once it is exhumed.

Galmoor's awakening distresses the Malgoth like nothing else the PCs have accomplished, and once the undead creature rises, the Malgoth turns its full focus on the PCs for the first time. One round after Galmoor rises, the clammy mist in the square becomes thicker and cold. Treat this mist as a *fog cloud* (granting all creatures within a 20% miss chance on attacks) that deals 1d6 points of nonlethal cold damage each round. This damage, being nonlethal, has no effect on the mohrg.

On the next round, the Malgoth causes the House of Radiance's façade to come crumbling down in a great explosion of rubble. All creatures within 40 feet of the temple at this time take 8d6 points of crushing damage (DC 15 Reflex save halves). Horribly, six of the iconic statues of saints and angels that were featured so prominently in the façade remain affixed in the air.

On the next round, these six saint and angel statues animate, spread vast wings of stone, and swoop down to join the mohrg in an attack against the PCs. These animated statues are similar to animated objects in some ways, yet the Malgoth has gifted them with additional qualities that make them far more dangerous (not least of which is the terror inspired by their fearsome twisted visages).

Galmoor, advanced mohrg: CR 12; Large undead; HD 26d12; hp 169; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +13; Grp +26; Atk +22 melee (1d8+13, slam) or +21 melee touch (paralysis, tongue); Full Atk +22 melee (1d8+13, slam) and +21 melee touch (paralysis, tongue); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA improved grab, paralyzing touch (DC 23), create spawn; SQ darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +13, Will +15; Str 29, Dex 17, Con —, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10; *Monster Manual* 189.

Skills: Climb +22, Hide +30, Listen +14, Move Silently +34, Spot +20, Swim +24.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (slam).

Animated statues of saints and angels (6): CR 7; Large construct; HD 8d10+40; hp 84 each; Init –1; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor); AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +6; Grp +15; Atk or Full Atk +10 melee (1d8+7, slam); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA fear gaze; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, low-light vision, spell resistance 17; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will –3; Str 20, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 14.

Feats: Flyby Attack[B].

Fear Gaze (Su): Fear, 30 feet, Will DC 16 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based. Those who fail become shaken. Shaken characters who fail to save become frightened, and frightened characters who fail to save become panicked.

The Malgoth Manifests (EL 16)

Once the mohrg is destroyed, the Malgoth's hold on the city of Istivin is broken immediately. Without the focus it has carefully funneled its power into over the years to anchor itself, it is forced to manifest as a physical form or be destroyed. Unfortunately for the Malgoth, manifesting its natural form makes it vulnerable to attack and thus destruction.

Creature: As the mohrg is defeated, any animated statues that still function crumble to the ground and shatter. At the same moment, the unnatural fog that blankets the city condenses inward into the square, transforming into a vast undulating cloud of shadowy mist, 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high. Three misty appendages like tentacles

emerge from the top of the cloud and writhe grotesquely. Swirling within the mist and barely visible are several large, silvery ovoids that appear to be eyes. Having long ago lost its physical form, the Malgoth can now only manifest in this incorporeal state until it can secure a properly prepared phylactery. Knowing its destruction is at hand, the Malgoth fights to the bitter end, hoping to defeat these mortal upstarts and use one of their corpses as its next phylactery.

The Malgoth, Abyssal entity: CR 16; Colossal outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, incorporeal, tanar'ri); HD 16d8+128; hp 200; Init +11; Spd fly 60 ft. (perfect); AC 15 (–8 size, +7 Dex, +6 deflection), touch 15, flat-footed 8; Base Atk +16; Grp —; Atk +15 melee touch (2d8 cold plus 1d6 Dexterity drain, tentacle); Full Atk +15 melee touch (2d8 cold plus 1d6 Dexterity drain, 3 incorporeal tentacles); Space/Reach 30 ft./30 ft.; SA Dexterity drain, spell-like abilities, *summon tanar'ri*; SQ all-around vision, damage reduction 15/good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, electricity, and poison, incorporeal, resistance to acid 10 and fire 10, spell resistance 25, telepathy 100 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +18, Ref +17, Will +17; Str —, Dex 24, Con 26, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 22.

Skills: Bluff +25, Concentration +27, Hide +10, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (local) +24, Knowledge (the planes) +24, Listen +24, Search +28, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +26, Spot +28, Tumble +26.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch).

Dexterity Drain (Su): The Malgoth drains 1d6 points of Dexterity each time it strikes with an incorporeal tentacle, and gains 5 hit points for each hit that successfully drains Dexterity.

Summon Tanar'ri (Su): Once per day the Malgoth can attempt to summon 2d4 babau or 1 hezrou with a 65% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 5th-level spell.

All-Around Vision (Ex): The Malgoth can see in every direction at once. It gains a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks, and can't be flanked.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp) (caster level 16): At will—*desecrate, detect good, detect law, animate object, Evard's black tentacles* (grapple check +24), *nightmare* (DC 21), *read magic, suggestion* (DC 19), *unholy aura* (DC 24), *unholy blight* (DC 20). 3/day—*dominate monster* (DC 25), *energy drain* (+15 ranged touch); 1/day—*blasphemy, unhallow*.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

As the dust clears after the Malgoth's defeat, the people of Istivin slowly begin to emerge from their homes. For some time, they wander confused in the streets, yet before long they realize what has changed. The terrible feeling of oppression, of being watched, of latent malignancy, has gone. The party has freed Istivin from the Malgoth and destroyed a hidden drow stronghold beneath the city, and in so

doing, they have made powerful allies of the March Of Sterich and Crown of Keoland. The marchioness authorizes a reward of gifts and magic items totaling at least 16,000 gp per character and declares a week of celebration in their honor. The deceased marquis's passing is mourned, but as the full import of what the party accomplished is realized, the marchioness understands that the PCs had little other choice in averting disaster.

If it fits into your campaign, the marchioness could reward the PCs with titles of nobility and perhaps an old, recently cleared border fort to serve as their keep. Alternately (likely at the counsel of her chief wizard, Verbane) the marchioness could see the PCs as a powerful and imminent threat to her government—a threat that must be quietly neutralized before the PCs gain too much of a following within the city. In this case the lawful (but severe) marchioness could become the party's worst nightmare. Is she truly a tragic victim of the recent troubles, or are the dark whispers about her involvement true? And who knows what sinister plots could be afoot at the hands of the mysterious Verbane?

Though down, the drow are unlikely to be out. The Vault of the Drow itself, deep beneath the Hellfurnaces, could have a continuing interest in the city of Istivin, rekindled by these recent events. House Tormtor, a former ally of Eilservs, could have further plans for Sterich. The Vault of the Drow was recently revisited in issues #298 and #300 of DRAGON. This could also be a good springboard for "The Harrowing," in *DUNGEON* #84.

With the party's newfound fame they find that there is no end to requests by city leaders and nobles (true and false) alike to undertake quests of vengeance or freedom. Giants still inhabit the border forts of Sterich. The dwarves of the Davish's headwaters need someone to lead a foray against the powerful and mysterious "Azure Prince" that controls the lucrative mines there.

Finally, the Malgoth may manifest again at some time in the future using a new focal point (maybe an evil artifact or powerful NPC) to resume its vile plans. Sterich has always had something of a reputation of as an "unlucky" place, and further misfortunes are sure to come its way. Perhaps there is something to this reputation connecting it inexorably to the masters of the Abyss. Demon lords like Orcus could continue to take an interest in the affairs of the March, as detailed in the adventure "Headless" from *DUNGEON* #89, which is also set in this haunted land.

Greg A. Vaughan is the author of "Tammeraut's Fate" (DUNGEON #106), "Torrents of Dread" (DUNGEON #114), "Touch of the Abyss" (DUNGEON #117), and "Shadow of the Abyss" (DUNGEON #118).

Scaling the Adventure

This adventure is designed for four characters of 12th level, but it can be adapted for 10th–11th level characters as detailed below. If you're feeling particularly adventurous, it can also be modified for higher-level characters as well.

10th- to 11th-level PCs: All NPCs with class levels should have their levels reduced by one or two. Remove two of the fiendish spiders from the Oestral Abyss. Cut down or eliminate altogether the random encounters in the Underdark tunnels. Reduce Zurrock's carrion crawlers by 3 Hit Dice each. Remove Silusa from area **4** entirely. The Dark Altar (area **15**) is particularly dangerous: be wary of having the PCs engage in combat there. Finally, in Istivin, reduce the mohrg's Hit Dice by 4–8, remove 1–3 of the animated statues, and reduce the Malgoth's Hit Dice by 4.

Higher-Level PCs: You can really have some fun here. First, show no mercy in any encounter; have the drow and demons fight to their fullest capability. Make sure the party encounters several random encounters in the Underdark, and feel free to add visiting monsters to Mirith Glarnon. A beholder arriving in the midst of a battle will certainly add to the challenge. Add Hit Dice or character levels to creatures to keep them in the party's range. Keep Derakhshan at least four levels above the party and have him call some umber hulks to assist him in area **15**. In Chapter Three, the optional encounters with shadowy monsters should be come mandatory encoutners. Add constructs to the final encounter and add HD to the Malgoth to keep its CR at least four above the party level.

MOUNT ZOGON
MUSHROOM! YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS! I GOT ATTACKED BY A GHOUL AND I SCREAMED AND A BUCKET-LOAD OF GREEN SLIME BLASTED OUT OF MY MOUTH !!!
ARE YOU OKAY ?
YES. THE SLIME TOTALLY DISSOLVED THE GHOUL! IT WAS SOOO COOL!
PERHAPS YOU DEVELOPED A SLIME-BASED ATTACK-MODE BECAUSE OF YOUR CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH ACIDIC SLIMES AND FUNGI.
TONYM ©2005
—EITHER THAT, OR IT'S TIME TO THROW-OUT THIS POT OF STEW.
GAAH!
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ZOGONIA.COM

TOMB OF Aknar Ratalla

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Any Setting • High Level (13–20) • Dungeon Crawl

Born the son of a tribal elder, Aknar Ratalla sneered at the gods of his people. He led armies against the religious in an age of red warfare, but was finally destroyed by an unlikely alliance of angels and devils. For centuries, Aknar Ratalla lay dead in his tomb, yet his evil lives on in his *Black Blade*. And now, a new evil marches on his crypt, intent to awaken what should remain forever asleep.

"Tomb of Aknar Ratalla" is a D&D adventure designed for four 14th-level characters. Characters with the ability to channel positive or negative energy to turn or rebuke undead are especially helpful in this adventure, as are characters with strong diplomatic skills.

Adventure Background

When they tried to banish him for blasphemy, Aknar Ratalla slew the tribal elders and proclaimed himself king. Aknar Ratalla's hatred of religion grew with his increasing power, and he outlawed worship of the ancestor-gods and led his army in bloody attacks on nearby tribes. For years, he continued his war against religion, razing temples and cathedrals to any divinity he encountered.

Victorious, Aknar Ratalla returned to his homeland. Yet his victory was short lived—two of the religions he ruined survived. And one winter morning, the angelic host and devilish minions of these two religions forged a pact. Alone, they couldn't stand against Aknar-Ratalla, but together, they formed a devastating army. They had little problem laying siege to Aknar Ratalla's fortress, and within a day of their assault the warlord's forces were routed, their cruel commander dead at the feet of the heavenly and infernal legions. Yet one thing survived unharmed: Aknar Ratalla's *Black Blade*.

The victors looked upon this potent weapon of evil and knew that its destruction was beyond their ability. Instead, the angels and devils decided to pool their resources to build a tomb to house Aknar Ratalla's remains and his sword. Two guardians were selected, one from either side. A group of dwarven architects and elven artisans were hired to build the tomb near a remote forest lake, and

a small group of elven monks remained behind to guard the location.

Ages passed. The guardians, despite their diligence, ultimately fell to the evil that emanated from the tomb and rose as foul undead. Constrained by their own deaths, they continue their stewardship, attacking anything that enters the area. Wights, ghasts, and shadows now defend the tomb of Aknar Ratalla, and the caverns that separate the catacombs from the surface world have become the lair of an ogre tribe. And now, a new player has entered the field.

T'kes Deathhand is the bastard son of a powerful balor named Ter-soth and a gnoll slave. With a fiendish hunger for power and a bloodthirst for battle, T'kes seeks to slay Ter-soth and take his place as a general in the Blood War. He has spent many years on the Material Plane, quietly building up his prowess and the strength of his gnoll war band, and recently learned of the *Black Blade of Aknar Ratalla*. T'kes hopes that it can give him the edge he needs to slay Ter-soth, and he now leads his warriors and a handful of yugoloth mercenaries to pillage the Tomb of Aknar Ratalla.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins as the PCs seek out the legendary tomb of Aknar Ratalla. Arriving at the tomb, they find the upper reaches to be infested with a powerful tribe of ogres. The tomb itself waits beyond, with its undead guardians and devious traps. Yet when the PCs near their goal, they discover that the tomb is in fact a vault for a profoundly evil artifact—the *Black Blade of Aknar Ratalla*. Worse, a dangerous half-fiend arrives in the region after the PCs enter the tomb. This is T'kes Deathhand, and he intends to send his army of deadly gnoll mercenaries into the tomb to claim the *Black Blade* as his own. The PCs and what defenses the tomb still has after their earlier exploration are all that stand between Deathhand and his goal.

Adventure Hooks

Getting the PCs to investigate Aknar Ratalla's tomb can be as easy as dropping a reference to the ancient warlord into a previous adventure. The PCs might find mention of him and his *Black Blade* in an old tome, along with a map that leads to his libram. Alternately, they might find an unlabeled treasure map that shows the route to his tomb and hints at the vast treasure rumored to be hidden therein. If these hooks don't work, you can use one of the following methods to get the PCs to explore Aknar Ratalla's tomb:

- Political enemies of a religious PC's church have been circulating rumors about a secret alliance between the church and a pervasive devil cult. Church elders initially dismissed the idea as preposterous, but one dedicated cleric (perhaps even one of the PCs) has discovered there may be more truth to these claims than falsehood. The church asks the party to travel to the village of Barilon and investigate the site of an ancient tomb said to be the focus of this disturbing alliance.Once there, the PCs must investigate the tomb to determine if there is any truth to the claims.

- An aging dwarven architect named Reinhardt recently discovered references to a tomb built by dwarves for an ancient human warlord. The dwarf has little interest in who or what might be buried in the tomb. What concerns him is the simple fact that no architectural plans or maps of this tomb seem to exist. He asks the PCs to travel to this tomb, the entrance to which is hidden in a cavern behind a waterfall near the village of Barilon, and to map the tomb in as much detail as possible. He also asks for sketches of unique architectural features, rubbings of carvings, and even samples of crumbled stonework that might have fallen from the walls or ceiling. Reinhardt offers to have a powerful dwarven cleric ally craft a suit of armor or weapon worth up to 20,000 gp as a reward for this service.

Chapter One: Finding the Tomb

The exact location of Aknar Ratalla's tomb is left vague, so you can place it with ease wherever best suits your campaign. This adventure assumes that the tomb is located in a temperate woodland on the edge of civilization, but you can change the terrain and location without affecting much of the adventure.

The closest settlement to the tomb is the frontier village of Barilon. Originally built and settled to provide the tomb's monk defenders access to basic necessities, the townsfolk have long since forgotten this duty. Today, Barilon consists of hunters, trappers, adventurers, and people who have come here from more civilized places to hide from their past. Everyone in Barilon has secrets, and they respect each other's privacy. Visitors to town are generally treated with civility, if not warmth, but it doesn't take long to pick up on the undercurrent of impatience and suspicion the locals have for outsiders.

If the PCs have not already discovered the tomb's location, a successful Gather Information check (DC 20) in Barilon is sufficient to learn from any of the locals about rumors of a tomb hidden in a local ogre den. Locals can tell the PCs that the ogre cave the tomb is hidden in is itself hidden behind a waterfall at the edge of a secluded lake. The PCs can reach this lake by following an old overgrown trail the locals call "The Old Tomb Trail." Of course, they can also reach the lake by traveling up the river just north of the village. Finally, if the PCs can fly, they can find the lake relatively easily from the air. Traveling directly through the forest itself is difficult, as the tangled undergrowth makes the region dense forest (*DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* 87).

♛ **Barilon (village)**: Conventional; AL CG; 200 gp limit; Assets 5,500 gp; Population 550; Mixed (human 79%; half-elf 8%; halfling 5%; elf 3%; gnome 2%; dwarf 1%; half-orc 1%; other 1%).

Authority Figures: Jarod Timani (mayor), male half-elf aristocrat 2; Dable Trisk (sheriff), male human warrior 5.

Important Characters: Stephani Karun, female halfling expert 4 (owner of Karun's General Store); Gareth Brill, male human cleric 3 (caretaker of the shrine of Fharlanghn); Darkham, male human fighter 3 (Amber's husband,

co-owner of The Goyle's Roost tavern); Amber Wolf, female elf sorcerer 2 (Darkham's wife, co-owner of The Goyle's Roost tavern).

Approaching the Tomb (EL 13)

Creatures: T'kes Deathhand and his mercenaries are still on the march for the tomb, yet he is not without agents in the region. He sent two gnoll scouts ahead to secure the cooperation of the local monster population. These two gnolls, Klirak and Bralg, have learned about a particularly surly ettin named Korg-Lurg living near the lake. The two gnolls hoped to contact the ettin and recruit him for Deathhand.

When the PCs approach the tomb for the first time, have them make DC 5 Spot and Listen checks to see or hear the two gnolls conversing with Korg-Lurg. Remember to adjust their checks by a cumulative –1 penalty for each 10 feet between the PCs and the monsters. Left to their own devices, the gnolls eventually convince the ettin to join the band of mercenaries, and the three of them head off to the north to meet up with the rest of the group. If either notices the PCs, they immediately attack.

Klirak and Bralg, male gnoll ranger 3/rogue 5 (2): CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 5d8+5 plus 5d6+5; hp 50 each; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +7; Grp +8; Atk +10 melee (1d8+3, *+2 flail*); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d8+3, *+2 flail*) and +8 melee (1d4+2, *+1 spiked shield*); SA favored enemy (elf) +2, sneak attack +3d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge, wild empathy +3; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Diplomacy +8, Disable Device +14, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +12, Open Lock +16, Search +14, Spot +12, Survival +9 (+11 following tracks).

Feats: Combat Expertise, Endurance[B], Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Bash, Track[B], Two-Weapon Fighting[B].

Languages: Gnoll, Orc.

Possessions: *+2 studded leather armor, +1 light steel shield* with *+1 shield spikes, +2 flail, potion of cure moderate wounds*, 160 gp.

Korg-Lurg, male ettin fighter 5: CR 11; Large giant; HD 10d8+40 plus 5d10+20; hp 132; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +12; Grp +25; Atk +21 melee (1d8+11, club); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+11, 2 clubs); SA —; SQ low-light vision, superior two-weapon fighting; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 28, Dex 11, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +14, Listen +11, Spot +1, Search +11.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave[B], Great Cleave[B], Improved Critical (club)[B],

Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (club), Weapon Specialization (club).

Language: Pidgin Orc/Goblin/Giant (see *Monster Manual* 107).

Possessions: *+2 hide armor*, 2 clubs, *amulet of natural armor +1*.

Tactics: Although the ettin and gnolls are close to coming to an agreement, they do not coordinate their attacks against the PCs. The ettin simply charges the closest PC and begins to club at him. The gnolls employ better tactics, moving to flank a target or flanking someone being attacked by the ettin. Korg-Lurg fights to the death, but the gnolls try to escape to their camp on the lakeshore if brought below 15 hit points.

Development: If captured, the gnolls can provide the PCs with significant information if they can adjust their hostile attitude to helpful. If the gnolls are made helpful, they tell the PCs that their leader, the magnificent and fearful T'kes Deathhand, will be arriving in only a few days to claim the Blade of Aknar Ratalla from a nearby tomb. They don't know why T'kes wants the blade, but they do know if he gets it there won't be many who will be able to stand against his might, and so they've thrown in their lot with the half-fiend gnoll to get with the winning side early. They can tell the PCs what Deathhand's forces consist of (see Chapter Three) but unless magically compelled, won't turn against him physically.

The Lake and Waterfall

The natural beauty of this wooded lake is breathtaking. The waters of the lake itself are still and blue, the shores thick with cattails and reeds. Fish jump now and then on its surface. The trees press closely to the northern shore, but the southern shore is fairly clear, forming a narrow band of open meadow between the water and the trees. The entire eastern shore is a one-hundred foot high cliff, and a majestic waterfall cascades over the face into the lake below.

Close inspection of the ridge along the northeast shore reveals a narrow, 3-foot-wide ledge stretching along the base of the cliff to the waterfall. It is 80 feet from lakeshore to waterfall; anyone who wishes to navigate the ledge can do so with a successful DC 12 Balance check. Failure by 5 or more indicates a slip and fall into the 30-foot-deep lake. Behind the waterfall, the rock wall opens into a large tunnel some 12 feet high.

Development: The X near the southern lake shore is a campsite used by Deathhand's two gnoll scouts. If the PCs didn't encounter Kilrak and Bralg before, they could encounter them here. If they've already defeated the gnolls, all that can be found here are some half-eaten boars and a now-cold campfire.

Chapter Two: Exploring the Tomb

The complex beyond the waterfall is divided into two connected regions. The upper region consists of a series of natural caverns, while the lower

region comprises the actual tomb itself. Unless otherwise noted, none of the chambers are lit.

The caverns are rough and natural, and ceiling height averages 12 feet in the passageways and 20 feet in the larger caves. The ogres have lived here for many years, and the caverns are fairly filthy as a result. The aroma of rotting fish, bodily waste, and musty cave funk is nearly overwhelming to those unused to the stink. Upon entering the caves, the PCs must make DC 15 Fortitude saves to avoid becoming sickened for 10 minutes.

Once the PCs head out of the caverns (areas **1–6**) and approach the tomb antechamber (area **7**), the walls become worked stone. Ceiling height averages 10 feet inside the tomb (areas **7–21**), with variations indicated in the text.

Areas **7–21** are under the influence of a *desecrate* effect (caster level 20), imbuing the entire area with negative energy. Turn undead checks within this area suffer a –3 profane penalty, and all undead in the tomb gain a +1 profane bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws (these bonuses are incorporated into any full stat blocks for undead encountered in these areas). Undead created in the tomb (including all undead encountered in the adventure), gain +1 hit point per HD. This effect is persistent but can be dispelled with *dispel magic*, *consecrate*, or a similar effect.

1. Rockfall Trap (EL 9)

The sound of the ogre tribe to the north should be relatively easy to hear. The ogres, for their part, rely on the deadly trap in this room to alert them to the presence of intruders in their caves.

Trap: A cleverly hidden tripwire is strung across the center of this cave; any creature that walks through the room triggers it automatically. Once triggered, the trap dumps a large number of heavy boulders down atop creatures in the central section of the room (inside the two shaded squares). Creatures in any square adjacent to these squares may take damage as well.

Crushing Boulders Trap: CR 9; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; boulders crush creatures in two shaded squares (12d6, crush) or strike creatures in squares adjacent to shaded squares (6d6, bludgeoning); DC 22 Reflex save half; Search DC 28, Disable Device DC 28.

2. Tribal Lair (EL 13)

The stench in this room is nauseating, the rancid odor of rotting flesh, unwashed bodies, caked blood, and worse mixing together into a miasma of wretchedness. Piles of furs line the walls and shattered bones litter the floor. The walls are decorated with crude, obscene drawings. At the far end of the room,

the floor drops away into impenetrable darkness. Several barrels sit near the edge of the pit.

The bulk of Graf's tribe of ogres dwells here. The piles of ragged furs serve as beds for the brutes. The barrels near the chasm edge contain fouled drinking water and hide a large, unlocked chest from view; this chest contains the ogres' treasure.

The chasm that splits the room is 200 feet deep; it is detailed in full in area **4**.

Creatures: The seven ogres that dwell here are all 4th-level barbarians; three are female and four are male, but all seven are equally destructive and foul-tempered.

Ogre barbarian 4 (7): hp 79 each; *Monster Manual* 199.

Tactics: The ogre barbarians maneuver themselves into positions where they can try to bull rush PCs into the chasm. They won't surrender as long as they think Graf is alive, but if they know he's been killed, they'll give up once at least four of their number are killed. They don't know much about the tomb to the north, but they do know that the chasm is haunted with infuriating "ghosts" that taunt them and throw lightning at them.

Treasure: Inside the chest is an assortment of trinkets: splinters of bone, pretty stones fished out of the river, and several handfuls of worthless costume jewelry. Yet below this top layer of clutter is hidden some actual treasure—2,300 sp, 893 gp, and a coral *ring of chameleon power*.

3. Chieftain's Cavern (EL 15)

The entrance to this cavern is obscured by an *illusory wall* spell (caster level 9); the wall is placed at the first turn in the passageway leading to this area from the cave entrance. A search of this apparently dead end might uncover tracks (left by this cavern's inhabitants) that seem to lead through a solid wall to the east. A successful Survival check (DC 13) by someone with the Track feat is enough to discover the footprints.

Creatures: Graf, the ogre chieftain of this tribe, claims this cave. His consort Henfels and his bodyguard Hronth also dwell here. The three spend most of their time here relaxing, eating, and carrying on, relying on the *illusory wall* Henfels created to the south to keep intruders from disturbing them. Although Graf is the publicly accepted leader of the tribe, Henfels is the more intelligent of the two and her advice to her lover is largely the reason for the tribe's success over the years. Henfels doesn't particularly care for the other ogres in area **2**, and often spends hours on end tormenting them with *dancing lights*, which they usually mistake for the hated will-o'-wisps from area **4**.

Graf, male ogre fighter 10: CR 13; Large giant; HD 4d8+16 plus 10d10+40; hp 135; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +13; Grp +25; Atk +20

melee (2d6+21/15–20, *+1 dwarf bane falchion* with 3-point Power Attack) or +13 ranged (1d8+8, masterwork javelin); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (2d6+21/15–20, *+1 dwarf bane falchion* with 3-point Power Attack) or +13/+8/+3 ranged (1d8+8, masterwork javelin); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA —; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 26, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +9, Craft (trapmaking) +11, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: Blind-Fight[B], Greater Weapon Focus (falchion)[B], Improved Bull Rush[B], Improved Critical (falchion)[B], Power Attack, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Craft [trapmaking]), Toughness (2), Weapon Focus (falchion)[B], Weapon Specialization (falchion)[B].

Languages: Giant.

Possessions: *+2 half-plate, +1 dwarf bane falchion*, 6 masterwork javelins, 2 *potions of cure serious wounds*, *potion of fly*.

Henfels, female annis hag sorcerer 9: CR 12; Large monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8+21 plus 9d4+27; hp 116 (102 without *false life*); Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 28, touch 14, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +11; Grp +23; Atk +19 melee (1d8+8, claw); Full Atk +19 melee (1d8+9, 2 claws) and +14 melee (1d6+5, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA improved grab, rake 1d6+9, rend 2d6+13, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 2/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 19, summon familiar (rat named Guttugger); AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +11, Will +12; Str 26, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +14, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Intimidate +6, Listen +8, Spot +8.

Feats: Alertness (as long as Guttugger is in arm's reach), Blind-Fight, Extend Spell, Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Spell Focus (illusion).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 8): 3/day—*disguise self*, *fog cloud*.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/6*/6*/7/5; caster level 9): 0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 16), *mage hand*, *message*, *ray of frost* (+13 ranged touch), *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st—*mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *silent image* (DC 17), *ventriloquism* (DC 17); 2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 16), *invisibility*, *false life*, *mirror image*; 3rd—*displacement*, *fly*, *major image* (DC 19); 4th—*illusory wall* (DC 20), *phantasmal killer* (DC 20).

*Henfels casts extended versions of *mage armor* and *false life* every morning.

Possessions: *Amulet of mighty fists +1*, *ring of protection +2*.

Guttugger, rat familiar: hp 51; *Monster Manual* 278.

Hronth, male troll ranger 6: hp 130; *Monster Manual* 247.

Tactics: Henfels uses her *fog cloud* spell-like ability to create as many clouds in the room as she can. She and Graf fight within the cloud, taking advantage of their Blind-Fight feats; Henfels even uses *ventriloquism* to make her spells sound like they're being cast from elsewhere in the cloud to further confuse enemies.

Treasure: Aside from their gear, Graf and Henfels have hidden four leather sacks beneath the furs they sleep on. Between the four sacks are 30,000 cp, 1,300 gp, 70 pp, a copper bracelet with an obsidian skull (50 gp), a scroll of *shocking grasp*, and a scroll of *Tenser's floating disk*.

4. Chasm of Hatred (EL 14)

A massive chasm cuts through the cave here, a strong wind whipping up from the shadows below and whispering as it rakes across the stone walls.

This chasm is a massive rent that was originally formed thousands of years ago as erosion from the river above seeped down through tiny fissures in the bedrock. Eventually, a large portion of the cliff face will collapse into the lake, exposing this area to the light of day, but for now the chasm remains stable. The ceiling is 40 feet high and the chasm itself is 200 feet deep. When Aknar Ratalla's tomb was constructed, its architects built a strong rope bridge between areas **3** and **5** to facilitate transport into the tomb. The bridge may look flimsy, but it is actually quite strong and has weathered the passage of time quite well. The bridge is 5 feet wide and stable, although characters who attempt to cross it must do so with a successful Balance check (DC 10) as it sways. Failure by 5 or more indicates a nasty fall into the chasm.

Creatures: Long before Graf and his ogres moved into these caves, a string of will-o'-wisps claimed this chasm. They ventured out periodically to prey upon hunters near the lake and river, but once the ogres moved in, the will-o'-wisps have had a steady supply of negative emotions to feast upon. In particular, they enjoy taunting the ogres, stealing in at night to zap one of them and then flitting away into the chasm, just out of reach, to dance about and torment them. Although they prefer to feed on fear, panic, and horror, they can just as easily feed on anger, hatred, and frustration.

Advanced will-o'-wisp (8): CR 8; Small aberration (air); HD 18d8+18; hp 99; Init +13; Spd fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 29, touch 29, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +13; Grp +4; Atk or Full Atk +23 melee touch (3d8 electricity, shock); SA —; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, natural invisibility; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +15, Will +14; Str 1, Dex 29, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +22, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Intimidate +3, Listen +24, Search +23, Spot +24.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (shock), Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse[B].

Languages: Auran, Common.

Tactics: The will-o'-wisps remain invisible, waiting for the PCs to explore this room or to pass through it, at which point one of them starts to glow down near the ground, 200 feet below. It flickers fitfully, appearing as a torchlight, and vibrates its body to create a faint cry for help that sounds like a lost hurt child. A successful Sense Motive check can uncover its Bluff. The creatures hope the PCs split their number to investigate, at which point they use Spring Attack to fly up, shock PCs, and

then fly away out of reach. The will-o'-wisps always employ Combat Expertise to its full potential, sacrificing five points from their attack rolls to increase their Armor Class to 34.

Treasure: Laying among the bones and rubble at the bottom of the chasm is a sack filled with 1,456 gp and an *immovable rod*.

5. Wyverntail Trap (EL 10)

Trap: The walls of this cave hide a deadly trap built ages ago by the dwarves who built Aknar Ratalla's tomb. The trap triggers if anyone moves quickly through the room, but ignores those who do nothing but move slowly through—as long as a creature in this cave takes no more than a single move action each round, the trap does not activate.

If the trap is triggered, four stone wyvern tails rattle out of the walls and begin stinging furiously at any creatures in the room. Each tail is anchored to the wall at the points indicated on the map. Once the trap is triggered, a creature is stung once by each tail that can reach him; each tail has a reach of 10 feet. Thus, a person standing in the middle of the cave is attacked by all four tails. The tails can make as many attacks as needed so that everyone in reach is attacked once per tail, even those in range who are moving slowly—once triggered, the trap does not discriminate between targets.

Wyverntail Trap: CR 10; magic device; visual trigger (*true seeing*, Spot +30); automatic reset; Atk +22 melee (1d6+4 plus poison, 4 stone wyvern tails); multiple targets (all creatures in 10-foot reach of a tail); poison (wyvern poison, DC 17 Fortitude resists, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search DC 28; Disable Device 28.

6. Unstable Cavern (EL 10)

The walls of this cave are on the verge of collapse. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (architecture or dungeoneering) check (dwarves and other creatures with stonecunning are entitled to this check even if their player doesn't announce he's making the check) reveals the peril.

One Medium creature (or two Small creatures) isn't enough to trigger the trap, but anything more than one Medium creature in this cavern causes the weakened floor to collapse, which in turn causes the walls and ceiling to collapse. Creatures in the cave when it collapses take 12d6 points of damage, or half that amount if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. They are subsequently buried. Characters within 15 feet of either entrance to the room take 3d6 damage, or no damage if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. All characters in the room and those who are just outside the room but fail their Reflex saves are buried. Rules for buried characters appear on pages 66–67 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*; this cave-in does additional damage to those in the bury zone due to the fact that the floor drops away as well as everything else.

7. Tomb Antechamber (EL 13)

Several cleverly hidden arrow slits line the walls between area **8A** and this room. While closed, only a keen eye (Spot DC 25) or a careful search (Search DC 20) can uncover them; the arrow slits are all currently closed. The double doors are locked (Open Locks DC 30) but not trapped.

Creatures: Two particularly dangerous spectres guard this entrance. Once members of the community of monks that dwelt in these halls, they were among the last to succumb to the creeping evil taint from Aknar Ratalla's sword. They did their best to hold off the flow of evil, yet eventually they succumbed just as their students did. Over the centuries that followed, constant proximity to the *Black Blade* strengthened the two undead spirits, evolving them into monsters beyond typical specters.

The two specters normally lurk in one of the two ambush points (area **8A**), but if they notice living creatures enter this room, they glide silently through the walls and attack, fighting to the death. They pursue intruders who flee into the tomb, but do not follow into areas **17–21**, nor will they pursue creatures out of the tomb and into the ogre caves.

The evolved undead template appears in *Libris Mortis*; these specters have had the template applied twice.

Evolved advanced spectres (2): CR 11; Medium undead (incorporeal); HD 14d12+14; hp 105; Init +8; Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft.; AC 20, touch 20, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +7; Grp —; Atk or Full Atk +16 melee touch (1d8+1 plus energy drain, incorporeal touch); SA create spawn, energy drain, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 3, incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, sunlight powerlessness, undead traits, unnatural aura; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +12; Str —, Dex 18, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 19; *Libris Mortis* 99.

Skills: Hide +21, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (religion) +19, Listen +21, Search +19, Sport +21.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Celestial, Common, Elven, Infernal.

Spell-Like Abilities (caster level 14): 1/day—*confusion* (DC 18), *hold monster* (DC 19).

8. Ambush Hall

This chamber was once used as a killing floor; several monks hidden in area **8A** observed anyone who entered the tomb by this antechamber and used the cleverly hidden arrow slits in the walls to assault anyone trying to invade by this entrance.

9. Privy

This small room is obviously a privy. A latrine sits to the north, its lid open but any odors that once may have plagued this room have long since fled.

The walls of the latrine shaft are smooth and caked with crumbly filth (Climb DC 30). The hole is 3 feet wide and drops down for 100 feet before ending in a 2-foot-deep layer of dried nastiness.

10. Larder

This chamber is full of crates and boxes. In one corner, large wooden casks stand in

an orderly fashion near the walls. The floor is covered with bits of hay and grain, and the room smells faintly of cedar.

The boxes are filled with foodstuff and dried goods (dried meat and vegetables, flour, wheat, and sugar) and the barrels contain either wine or fresh water (50% chance of either). The items appear to be ready for consumption, but are actually tainted by the evil that fills the tomb. Anyone who eats or drinks any of this room's contents must make a Fortitude save (DC 17) or be poisoned (initial and secondary damage is 2d6 Strength).

11. Kitchen and Cafeteria (EL 11)

The air here is fetid, a nauseating combination of death and the lingering odor of cooked food. Four large tables stand in the center of the room, with three places set at each table. Two huge fireplaces, their hearths dark and obviously cold, dominate two walls. Three of the corners hold barrels and the fourth a door.

The barrels are brimming with clear water, but Aknar Ratalla's taint has infused the water with poison. (See area **10** for details on the effects of drinking this water.)

Creature: A stone golem created by one of the elven clerics (see area **12**) still toils here under the last command it was given—to chop up some food. It stands before a ruined table, mindlessly chopping at the air with a large cleaver. The golem stops chopping as soon as anyone enters the room and moves toward intruders. If attacked, the golem drops the cleaver and fights back, pursuing its attackers until it is slain. If the golem is not attacked, it continues to follow the characters around until it is attacked, or until someone gives the golem an object. Given an object, the golem returns to this room and starts chopping the object up. The golem won't follow anyone beyond area **7** into the caves.

Stone golem: hp 107; *Monster Manual* 136.

12. Bath (EL 12)

This damp room stinks of old mold and mildew. The floors and walls of the place are caked with black and dark green swaths of the stuff.

The thick layer of mold and mildew in this room grows on the floor and across the surface of the pool of water that takes up the majority of the room. A successful DC 15 Spot check is enough to notice the fact that the ground in the middle of the room isn't solid; characters with at least five ranks in Knowledge (nature) gain a +2 synergy bonus on this Spot check. The water in the pool is 4 feet deep; consult pages 64–65 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* for details on how the water affects combat.

Creatures: Four elven clerics lived with the monks long ago, serving as spiritual advisors for the group. They were the first to notice that the relics of Aknar Ratalla were "seeping evil" into the surrounding region. They tried to contain the evil in a daring but ultimately foolish attempt to "siphon" off the evil leakage into the Negative Energy Plane, but the plan backfired. Instead of shunting the evil away, it released a powerful pulse of negative energy that transformed the four clerics into bodaks. The surge of negative energy and new bodaks made short work of the surviving monks, but vestigial remnants of their loyalty to their leader prevented them from attacking him. Instead, they retreated to this room, the pool having brought them pleasure in the past. Now, the bodaks simply loll about underwater, clinging desperately to the shards of their memories until living creatures enter the room.

Bodaks (4): hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 28.

13. Catacombs

Sepulchers have been crafted along the walls of this icy cold chamber, one above another, but all appear empty. The walls are decorated with engravings of forests and trees, exquisitely detailed, with every leaf outlined, every blade of grass individually crafted.

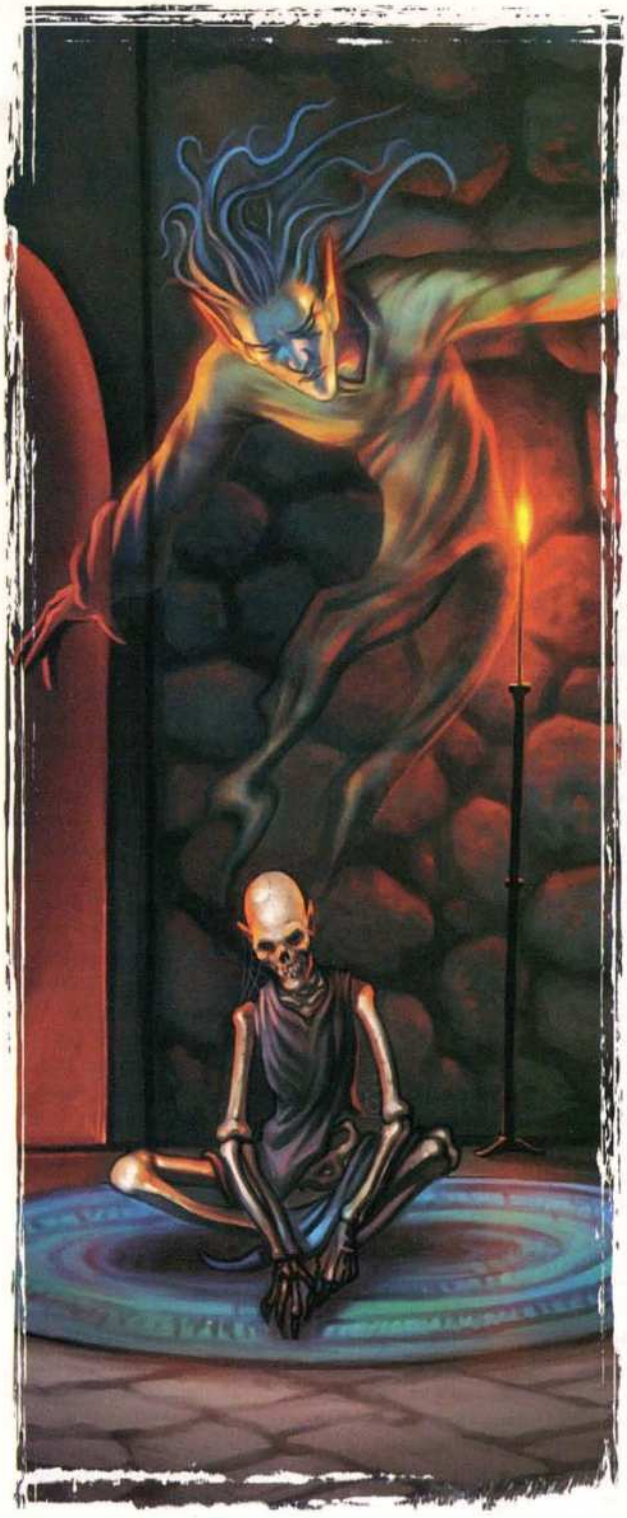
These catacombs were prepared to hold the bodies of the monks that defended the tomb. The bodies that were once interred in the sepulchers here became infused with negative energy long ago, rising as the undead that now lurk in area **14**.

14. Training Room (EL 14)

This large chamber's vaulted ceiling stretches thirty feet overhead. It appears to have been some sort of combat or training room, as weapons hang from the walls—crossbows, quarterstaffs, and stranger, more unusual weapons, all grouped together by type. Several pillars stand in the center of the room, reaching up to the high ceiling above. Thick, padded mats cover the floor in the room's corners.

Creatures: This chamber was used by the monks to exercise and maintain their physical health during their long stay in the tomb. When the clerics' plan to shunt the evil energies of Aknar Ratalla's weapons into the Negative Energy Plane backfired, the bodies of those monks interred in the catacombs (area **13**) became infused with negative energy and transformed into wights. Today, nine wights lurk in this chamber, were they continue to maintain their monastic exercises and training by sparring with each other. They immediately attack anything that enters the room, pursuing enemies as far as area **16** or out of the dungeon entirely if necessary.

Wight monk 8 (9): CR 8; Medium undead; HD 4d12 plus 8d8; hp 74; Init +3; Spd 50 ft.; AC 22, touch 18, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +8; Grp +15; Atk +12 melee (1d4+4 plus energy drain, slam); Full Atk +11/+11/+6 melee (1d10+4, unarmed strike) and +7 melee (1d4+2 plus energy drain, slam); SA create spawn, energy drain; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, *ki strike* (magic), purity of body, slow fall 40 ft., still mind, undead traits, wholeness of body (restore up to



16 hp/day); AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +15; Str 16, Dex 16, Con —, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +5, Climb +11, Hide +10, Jump +21, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +13, Move Silently +18, Spot +13, Tumble +11.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge, Improved Grapple[B], Improved Trip[B], Mobility, Spring Attack.

Language: Elven.

Treasure: The weapons along the walls are ancient and non-magical, yet universally of exquisite make. All of the weapons are masterwork, and include 6 light crossbows, 6 heavy crossbows, 12 kamas, 12 nunchaku, 12 quarterstaffs, and 12 sianghams.

15. Guard Chamber (EL 9)

This small room is devoid of furniture. The ceiling and walls are blank stone but the floor has been decorated with intricate carvings and mosaic inlays of colorful zigzagging patterns that must have taken months to create.

This small room was designed as a trap to slay unwary intruders—if intruders managed to penetrate area 8, several monks would lure enemies into this room and (hopefully) to their doom, since the monks could move through the room without triggering the trap.

Trap: The patterns on the floor are the key to safely navigating this trap. Each of the zigzagging patterns is a 2-inch-wide band; by balancing on the white bands, a character can pass through the room safely. The safe color is an arbitrary choice. Only by successfully exceeding the trap's Disable Device check by 10 can a character determine which color is safest. Moving along the white bands requires a successful DC 15 Balance check. Failure resulting in a fall causes the trap to be triggered, as does walking through the room normally. Creatures that don't contact the floor and incorporeal creatures do not trigger the trap. If the trap is triggered, razor-sharp blades scythe out of the floor. A swath of three blades attacks any creature standing on that particular 5-foot square. Large (or larger) creatures can be hit by multiple 5-foot sections at once.

Scything Blades: CR 9; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +18 melee (2d6+8/×4, 3 Large scythes per five-foot square); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

16. Tomb Entrance (EL 14)

The doors, walls, floor, and ceiling of this room are made of iron and infested with small, wickedly barbed spikes that cover every surface. A large, granite statue stands atop a pedestal in the center of this room. It depicts a bearded human figure, his eyes cast skyward, his handsome face twisted in an eternal grimace of hate and his left hand clutching a bastard sword held up in readiness against unseen

foes. The figure wears full plate armor that bristles with spikes and points, and bears a large shield covered with demonic faces twisted in torment. The pedestal itself is unmarked, save for an engraving in Celestial that encircles its rim.

The ceiling here is 15 feet high, built higher than most of the complex to accommodate the statue of Aknar Ratalla that stands here. This statue was placed here to remind the monks of what they were protecting. The engraving that stretches along the pedestal is an ancient elf proverb that states, "Knowledge of your enemy weighs more heavily than the prowess of your blade."

The hooks and spikes make walking in this room somewhat dangerous; moving through the area is identical to moving through an area warded by caltrops (see page 126 of the *Player's Handbook*). The hooks and spikes are part of a dangerous trap that is triggered by attempting to open the door leading to area **18** (see Trap, below).

Creatures: Of more immediate concern to those who wish to enter this room are the swarms of writhing creatures that cover the floor and walls. Individually appearing as fat white spiders with bony legs, these are bonespider swarms that were introduced into the tomb when the clerics tried to siphon the evil energy of Aknar Ratalla's artifacts into the Negative Energy Plane. The swarms pursue living creatures throughout the tomb, but lose interest if their prey retreats further than area **7**.

Bonespider swarms (5): hp 88; see Appendix.

Trap: The builders of this tomb created a dangerous trap in this chamber, which serves as the only entrance to Aknar Ratalla's crypt. The trap is triggered the moment anyone tries to open the door to area **18**. At this point, metal sheets slide over all the doorways into the room, sealing the contents in. Creatures within 5 feet of a door can make a Reflex save (DC 15) to either move into the room or out of it as the doors slam shut. One round later, the entire room drops 20 feet into a pit; all creatures in the room take 2d6 points of damage from the fall (including the swarms). One round later, the entire room begins to violently shift and pivot like a box poorly balanced on the tip of a spear. This counts as violent motion for the purposes of making Concentration checks (see page 70 of the *Player's Handbook*). In addition, any creatures in the room take 2d6 points of piercing/slashing damage each round as they are thrown back and forth against the hooks and spikes that cover the floors and walls. Note that the bonespider swarms are immune to this damage. A successful Balance or Climb check (DC 20) allows a character to cling to the floors or walls and avoid this damage for that round. The trap, once triggered, continues to shake and vibrate its contents for one minute, after which the room returns to its normal position and the metal sheets retract, allowing access to the doors once again.

While the trap is triggered, anyone who opens the doors from the hallway finds only solid stone, since the room is dropped down like a large piston, and the block of stone that is attached to the room lowers to block entrance into the tomb while the trap is triggered.

Ironhook deathrattle trap: CR 9; mechanical; touch trigger; automatic reset; hidden switch bypass (Search DC 30); no attack roll required (2d6 followed by 2d6 per round for 1 minute); multiple targets (everyone in the room); Search (DC 30); Disable Device (30).

17. Meditation Chamber (EL 12)

This long, wide chamber is thick with the odor of stale incense. Two doors stand in two opposing corners; in the other two hang large incense burners, though no smoke emanates from them. More than a dozen thick green and blue rugs are scattered throughout the room, and on one of them slumps an elf's skeleton.

Creature: This ancient meditation chamber is where the monks meditated and slept. When tragedy struck and nearly all the monks were killed, their leader, K'thentyr, survived. This elven monk retreated here to meditate and seek guidance. Yet no guidance came, and eventually K'thentyr died of thirst, rising as a ghost within minutes of his last breath.

When the PCs enter this room, the ghost rises up from his bones. His visage is sad and mournful, almost as if he despairs that he must do battle with intruders. In fact, K'thentyr does not make the first move in combat; instead, he waits for the PCs to make the first move. if they address him, he is willing to talk.

If the PCs don't immediately attack K'thentyr, the ghost addresses them in Common (or elven, if at least one PC is obviously an elf or half-elf). He warns them that the treasures they seek must remain here, that seekers of evil should flee before evil seeks them in turn. His starting attitude is unfriendly, but a Diplomacy or Intimidate checks can have dramatic results. If the PCs have learned about Deathhand's interest in the treasure of the tomb and warn K'thentyr about this, they gain a +2 bonus on their check. If they promise to defend the tomb and not take Aknar Ratalla's sword, give them a +4 bonus as well. On the other hand, if they try to turn him, they suffer a –4 penalty on their check.

If hostile (Check Result 4 or less): K'thentyr immediately attacks.

If unfriendly (Check Result 5–14): K'thentyr repeatedly warns the PCs away. He acts menacing, swooping toward them, but he won't attack until the PCs do so. "Flee before you become part of the cycle! Naught remains here but death and evil! Any who touch the black blade risk renewing its curse and dooming the land!"

If indifferent (Check Result 15–24): K'thentyr describes the history of the tomb and Aknar Ratalla, then bids the PCs be gone. "You don't know what you've gotten yourself into. This isn't just a tomb—it's a vault for a powerful weapon that the forces of evil have long coveted."

If friendly (Check Result 25–39): K'thentyr describes the tomb's history and layout in general terms (though he doesn't know the specifics of the traps,

only that they exist). He also tells the PCs about the guardians in area 21. "The blade's malicious power is so great that both an angel and a devil guard it forever." The ghost tells the PCs what to expect when they reach the tomb itself. He also tells the PCs about the treasure under his mat.

If helpful (Check Result 40 or higher): As the result for friendly above, but K'thentyr actively consults and aids the PCs in battles against intruders in Chapter Three. He'll even aid in battles against the undead in the tomb if the PCs ask him for help.

K'thentyr, male elf ghost monk 10: CR 12; Medium undead (incorporeal); HD 10d12; hp 75; Init +3; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 23, touch 23, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +7; Grp +9; Atk +11 melee touch (1d4 Strength drain, draining touch) or +11 melee (1d10+3, unarmed strike against ethereal opponents, 50% miss chance against physical targets); Full Atk +10 melee touch (1d4 Strength drain, draining touch) or +11/+11/+6 melee (1d10+3, unarmed strike, 50% miss chance against physical targets); SA draining touch, manifestation, telekinesis; SQ improved evasion, *ki* strike (lawful and magic), purity of body, rejuvenation, slow fall 50 ft., still mind, +4 turn resistance, wholeness of body; AL LN; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 16, Con —, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 20; *Monster Manual* 116.

Skills: Balance +5, Diplomacy +7, Hide +11, Jump +4, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +19, Search +10, Sense Motive +16, Spot +19, Tumble +16.

Feats: Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge, Improved Trip[B], Mobility, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist[B], Weapon Finesse.

Languages Spoken: Celestial, Common, Elven, Infernal.

Rejuvenation (Su): K'thentyr can remanifest 2d4 days after he has been destroyed with a successful level check (1d20+10) against DC 16. The one sure way to ensure he doesn't come back is to either destroy Aknar Ratalla's artifacts or remove them from the tomb with the permission of both the tomb's current guardians.

Tactics: If K'thentyr is forced to attack, he favors his draining touch, using Spring Attack to leap out of and back into walls as he fights. If a character has a weapon or object that seems to be particularly effective against him, he uses telekinesis to disarm the object.

Treasure: Underneath one of the mats is a folded black cloth. This is a folded *portable hole*. Within are a *pair of slippers of spider climbing* and a small table on which sit three large bronze keys (for the locked doors in areas **18**, **19**, and **20**).

Ad-hoc Experience Award: If the PCs successfully negotiate a bargain with K'thentyr, award them experience as if they had defeated him in combat.

18. Falling Blocks (EL 12)

The floor of this long, shallow room is made up of white and black squares arranged in a checkerboard pattern. The walls are engraved with depictions of a bearded figure in evil-looking, spiked armor; he appears to be leading an army of demons against winged, elven figures.

The checkerboard pattern on the floor of this room may look ominous, but it is in fact harmless; the actual trap here is keyed to the door leading to area **19**.

Trap: The door to area **19** is locked (Open Locks DC 30), but one of the keys in the *portable hole* serves to both unlock the door and bypass the trap. Of course, since the three keys are quite similar in shape and size, determining exactly which key is the right one to use requires a Search check (DC 25).

Anyone who touches the door or tries to open it without first inserting the correct key into the lock triggers two falling block traps in the ceiling. Each block of stone is 10 cubic feet—the north one blocks the northernmost 10-foot-square section of this room, while the south one does the same to the southernmost 10-foot-square area, leaving a 5-foot-wide open area in the middle of the room. Once the blocks fall, they must be destroyed or bypassed with magic. Repairing the traps also works, but creatures trapped under blocks or between them can't get to the mechanisms to repair them.

Falling block traps (2): CR 10; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; ceiling block drops down (10d6, crush); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. section at either end of the room); never miss; Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Development: If the PCs have not yet encountered K'thentyr's ghost (see area **17**), allow him to make a Listen check to hear the PCs in this room. If they're not taking pains to stay quiet, check the list of Listen DCs on page 78 of the *Player's Handbook* to determine the DC for the ghost's Listen check. Remember to apply a +15 modifier to the check's DC for listening through a stone wall. If the trap is sprung, K'thentyr automatically notices. If he hears the PCs, he passes through the wall into this area to confront them and possibly speak to them, as detailed in area **17**.

19. Tomb Hallway (EL 10)

The walls of this short hallway are decorated with detailed mosaics that depict an army of demons fighting amid walls of flames, apparently battling against other demons as a bearded man laughs from atop an infernal horse.

This short hallway leads to another locked door identical to the one between areas **18** and **19**. Like that door, only one of the keys from the *portable hole* in area **17** works to open its lock and bypass the trap. If the PCs have already identified which of the three keys opens the prior door, they gain a +5 circumstance bonus on the Search check to identify this second key.

Trap: As with the trap in area **18**, this trap is triggered by touching or attempting to open the door without first using the proper key on the lock. If the trap is triggered, the entire floor of this room slides away with lightning speed into the northern wall, dumping everyone in the room into a 100-foot-deep pit. Characters who avoid the trap with a successful Reflex save either jump through an open doorway

or cling precariously to the tiny gap left behind by the floor's withdrawal into the wall. One round after it is triggered, the floor slides back into place with equally shocking speed. Worse, its edges are razor sharp, and deal 6d6 points of slashing damage to anything (ropes, player characters) hanging into the pit from above. A character may attempt to avoid the damage by making a DC 25 Reflex save; if he chooses to drop into the pit rather than leap onto the moving floor, he gains a +4 bonus on his save.

Spiked pit trap (100 ft. deep): CR 10, mechanical; touch trigger; automatic reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; 100 ft. deep (10d6, fall); multiple targets (all targets in room); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 each); Search DC 28, Disable Device DC 28.

20. Tomb Antechamber

This empty room contains only one thing of note—a set of huge, iron doors engraved with a combination of arcane symbols and hideous carvings of screaming faces, broken limbs, tortured flesh, and writhing insects. A rime of frost seems caked on the doors, throwing the highlights into stark contrast with the dark shadows that surround them. A single small keyhole graces the two double doors where they meet.

The iron double doors are freezing cold to the touch and quite strong. The final key from the three in the portable hole opens this door, which, despite its fearsome appearance, is not trapped. Anyone who touches the door with bare flesh takes 2d4 points of cold damage per round of contact.

Iron Double Doors: 6 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 120 each; Open Locks DC 30; Break DC 35.

21. The Tomb Of Aknar Ratalla (EL 15)

The air in this tall chamber gives an almost physical definition to the concept of evil; it seems to hang in the air like mist, to slide down the walls and puddle on the floor at your feet. An open sarcophagus lies in the middle of the room, watched over by two silent figures: on one side, a beautiful winged human stands guard, a heavy mace held casually in his grip. A faint smile flickers across his face but his eyes remain unreadable. Across from him, towering over the angelic figure, is a twelve-foot tall, bluish-white insectoid monster. Its long, thorny tail twitches like a cat's, and it leans on a metal longspear with a wicked, barbed point.

The ceiling in this room is 20 feet tall, as high as it is deep, and the atmosphere, though unpleasant, won't cause any lasting damage.

Creatures: The two creatures that stand astride the sarcophagus are the original guardians placed here centuries ago—Tessakar (an astral deva) and Eistach (an ice devil). Though neither would consider the other a friend, each has had a profound impact on the other. The celestial has picked up his companion's penchant for sarcasm, while the devil has begun to consider mortals as slightly more than a source of food or souls. They still do not trust each other but will battle together quite well if they are attacked.

If the PCs do not immediately attack, the guardians simply watch and wait for them to make the first move. Though they do not initiate conversation (if nothing else, they have learned much about patience over the ages), they are both interested in what has transpired during their time here. If the PCs tell them of T'kes and his minions, they laugh at the half-fiend's audacity, commenting that they "have been ready for a battle for centuries." As the PCs speak to the outsiders, the main speaker should make a Diplomacy or Intimidate check. Other PCs can use the aid another action to help the result. If the PCs insist they have no intention to claim Aknar Ratalla's sword for their own use, they gain a +2 bonus on the check. If they mention that they would like to claim the sword (including making any obvious attempts to get to the sarcophagus), though, they suffer a –20 penalty on the check. If the PCs have learned about Deathhand's plans and make them clear to the outsiders, they gain another +2 bonus on the check. The outsiders have an initial attitude of unfriendly. The results of successful (or failed) Diplomacy or Intimidate checks are outlined below.

If hostile (Check result 4 or less): The outsiders immediately move to defend the sarcophagus and its contents as detailed under Tactics below.

If unfriendly (Check result 5–14): The outsiders remain suspicious, and command the PCs to leave the tomb at once or face dire consequences. They do not yet attack. The PCs may attempt a new Diplomacy or Intimidate check, but their efforts thus far have started to annoy the outsiders. As a result, their checks suffer a cumulative –5 penalty each time they attempt to adjust their attitudes and gain this result.

If indifferent (Check result 15–24): The outsiders remain impassive. They do not offer any assistance to the PCs, but neither do they take any actions against them. The PCs may attempt a new Diplomacy or Intimidate check at no penalty.

If friendly (Check result 25–39): The outsiders warm to the PCs. They'll be willing to help the PCs by using their spell-like abilities. Tessakar's most helpful abilities are *aid*, *holy aura*, *cure light wounds* (up to seven times a day) and even *heal* (once per day). Eistach's most helpful abilities are *fly* and *unholy aura*.

If helpful (Check result 40 or higher): As friendly, but the two outsiders agree to aid the PCs in preparing a defense of the tomb against T'kes Deathhand and his minions. They'll only leave the sarcophagus undefended one at a time, and only then if at least one PC remains behind while the other outsider helps with defenses. The outsiders look to the PCs for advice on how to defend the tomb. Tessakar can try to dispel unwelcome magic effects (including the *desecrate* aura), for example, or Eistach can use *persistent image* to create illusions to confound intruders.

THE TOMB
OF AKNAR RATALLA
17
16
12
19
18
20
11
21
15
14
10
9
8a
8
8a
13
7
1 square = 5 feet
WEST

Tessakar, male astral deva: hp 102; *Monster Manual* 11.

Eistach, male ice devil: hp 147; *Monster Manual* 56.

Tactics: If combat breaks out, the outsiders fight together, each using his own abilities to aid the other. Tessakar spends the first few rounds of combat placing *blade barriers* around the sarcophagus while Eistach uses *cone of cold* against the PCs. Tessakar is immune to cold, so the ice devil isn't worried about catching the deva in the cone's area of effect. Eistach won't summon more devils, as he's worried that such reinforcements might sense the proximity of Aknar Ratalla's sword and attempt to claim it for their own. As the PCs attack, the two outsiders also use words in an attempt to convince the PCs to break off the attack. Tessakar cries out, "Stand down! Though this devil is evil, he guards an even greater evil. I will not tolerate his destruction!" while Eistach might say, "Fools! The angel and I are here for a reason. Don't attack what you don't understand!"

If Eistach is slain or disabled, Tessakar does what he can to help the devil but continues to fight until he is slain himself or the PCs retreat or are defeated. On the other hand, if Tessakar is slain or disabled, the devil's true nature comes to the fore. He takes a full-round action to heave aside the sarcophagus lid, and on the next round takes a move action to grab Aknar Ratalla's sword, followed by a *greater teleport* to escape with the powerful weapon.

Treasure: Inside of the sarcophagus is Aknar Ratalla's ancient corpse, with his armor, shield, and bastard sword. The armor is a suit of *+4 moderate fortification spiked full plate* and the shield is a *+4 animated heavy steel shield*. The bastard sword is a powerful and evil artifact called the *Black Blade of Aknar Ratalla*; it is detailed in the Appendix.

Chapter Three: Defending the Tomb

You should time T'kes Deathhand's arrival to occur at some point while the PCs are within either the ogre caves or the tomb itself. The half-fiend's band of mercenaries consists of more than forty gnolls and more than half a dozen yugoloths, although not all of the gnolls take part in the invasion of the tomb. When T'kes first arrives in the area, his mercenaries set up camp on the south shore of the lake, erecting crude tents and lighting several fires.

If the PCs emerge from the tomb, they should notice the gnoll encampment immediately. They should also note how disciplined, organized, and tough-looking the gnolls are. While it's certainly possible for a high-level party to successfully assault Deathhand's minions, chances are good that the dangerous gnolls and yugoloths overwhelm even the most organized assault on their position. This adventure assumes the PCs retreat to the tomb itself to use their familiarity with its layout to their advantage to defend it from Deathhand's minions. If the PCs still haven't discovered who T'kes is and what his plans are, you should strive to get them this information in some way before the half-fiend begins his invasion of the tomb. Perhaps the PCs could learn of his goals by casting some divination spells, or maybe they overhear some juicy conversations while scouting out the camp.

Preparing a Defense

The most obvious way the PCs can defend Aknar Ratalla's tomb is to pick some defensible location, such as areas **7** and **8**. Their knowledge of the tomb's layout gives them a terrific advantage over the gnoll forces initially. Many of the traps in the tomb can serve to weaken the gnoll forces as well, especially if a PC rogue has managed to master the trap and can rig it so she and her allies can move through a trapped area without triggering it.

Some of the creatures in the tomb make good guardians as well. Some of these creatures (like the ogres and will-o'-wisps) can conceivably be bargained with or bribed to aid in the tomb's defense if the PCs haven't killed them off. These creatures are initially hostile, but they only need to be made friendly (with a DC 35 Diplomacy or Intimidate check) in order to be convinced to help defend their territory from the gnolls. The stone golem in area **11** can't be reasoned with, but it can be guided to a key location (such as area **8**) and made to wait by locking it in—the golem isn't smart enough to open or bash down doors. The golem reacts to the gnolls the same way it reacts to the PCs initially—by approaching them for food. The gnolls immediately attack the golem in response, and thus find themselves in a fight. The undead can't be reasoned with, but if the PCs manage to get by them without killing them, they'll attack the gnolls on sight as well. Of course, leaving the undead to fight the gnolls is a risky business, since the gnoll clerics might be able to take command of some of them. In any case, when the gnolls encounter one of these groups of monsters, you should allow the PCs to control the monsters' actions.

Some other aspects of the tomb that might aid in defending the sword of Aknar Ratalla are as follows.

- The portable hole from area **17** makes an excellent improvised pit trap; simply put it in a key area and throw a rug or large mat over it. A successful DC 15 Reflex save is good enough to avoid falling into the camouflaged pit, and none of the gnolls realize the hole is anything but a pit, allowing the PCs to double back, reclaim, and reuse the pit several times. Filling the pit with water from area **12** makes it even more dangerous to the gnolls, who aren't the strongest swimmers.

- Destroying the bridge at area **4** slows the gnolls down significantly, since they'll need to figure out a way to cross the chasm without it (see Deathhand's Descent, below).

- Finally, if the PCs have access to powerful teleportation magic, they'll be able to *teleport* to a friendly settlement to seek extra muscle.

T'kes Deathhand's Mercenaries

T'kes and his mercenaries are a dangerous group. As a whole, these yugoloths and gnolls can quickly overwhelm even powerful adventurers. By ambushing and assaulting them in waves as they attempt to invade Aknar Ratalla's tomb, the PCs have a much better chance of defeating them.

Creatures: The majority of the mercenaries are gnolls with class levels. Deathhand has organized them into the following groups.

Gnoll Squads (EL 12): There are six of these squads, although four of them do not enter the tomb, instead guarding the base camp. Each gnoll squad consists of three gnoll soldiers and one gnoll priest. A gnoll squad sends its three soldiers to engage the party while the priest hangs back to support them with magic as needed.

Primary Assault Squad (EL 15): This deadly force consists of six gnoll soldiers and two mezzoloths; this group is the most dangerous one under Deathhand's command (with the exception of Deathhand's personal entourage). As such, T'kes prefers to hold this group back initially, testing the PCs with his less dangerous squads.

Secondary Assault Squad (EL 14): Second only to the primary assault squad, this band consists of four gnoll soldiers and two canoloths. T'kes uses this group before sending the primary assault squad into the fray.

Scout Squad (EL 13): This squad consists of three gnoll scouts and a canoloth. This is the first group that T'kes sends into the tomb, hoping they can learn as much about the tomb's layout as possible before exposing his other troops to danger.

Ark Bearers (EL 14): This squad of four gnoll priests carries one of Deathhand's greatest treasures, the *Ark of Forced Return*. T'kes expects to encounter some powerful and dangerous outsiders in the tomb itself, and plans on using the *Ark* to banish them rather than risk an open attack on them. Details on the *Ark* appear in the Appendix.

Deathhand's Entourage (EL 16): T'Kes Deathhand himself travels with two mezzoloth bodyguards.

The canoloths and mezzoloths are members of a race known as the yugoloths, fiendish outsiders from the neutral evil outer planes. Canoloths are dog-like eyeless monsters with long barbed tongues, and mezzoloths are six-limbed insectoid horrors with glowing red eyes. A yugoloth's weapons (natural or otherwise) are considered evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Gnoll soldier, fighter 6 (34): CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8+6 plus 7d10+21; hp 74 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +8; Grp +13; Atk +10 melee (1d8+13/19–

20/×3, *+1 battleaxe* with 5-point Power Attack) or +10 ranged (1d8+5/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+13/19–20/×3, *+1 battleaxe* with 5-point Power Attack) or +10/+5 ranged (1d8+5/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA —; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 21, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +3, Listen +5, Spot +6, Swim –2.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave[B], Improved Critical (battleaxe), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack[B], Weapon Focus (battleaxe)[B], Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)[B].

Languages: Gnoll.

Possessions: Full plate, *+1 heavy steel shield, +1 battleaxe, amulet of natural armor +1*, masterwork composite longbow (+5 Str) with 20 arrows, *2 potions of cure moderate wounds*, 120 gp.

Gnoll scout, ranger 3/rogue 5 (3): hp 50 each; see page 61.

Gnoll priest, cleric 9 (11): CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 11d8+33; hp 82 each; Init –1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +7; Grp +10; Atk +10 melee (2d4+9 plus 2d6/×4, *+1 vicious scythe* with 2-point Power Attack); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (2d4+9 plus 2d6/×4, *+1 vicious scythe* with 2-point Power Attack); SA spells, rebuke/command undead (8/day); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +3, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +8, Knowledge (religion) +1, Listen +5, Spot +6.

Feats: Extra Turning, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scythe).

Languages: Gnoll, Infernal.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 9): 0—*cure minor wounds* (3), *guidance* (3); 1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *disguise self*[D], *hide from undead, magic stone, shield of faith*; 2nd—*bull's strength, cure moderate wounds* (2), *find traps, invisibility*[D], *spiritual weapon*; 3rd—*animate dead*[D], *cure serious wounds* (2), *dispel magic, protection from energy*; 4th—*confusion*[D], *cure critical wounds, divine power*; 5th—*dispel law, slay living*[D].

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Death (death touch 1/day, damage 9d6), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: *+1 full plate, +1 vicious scythe, cloak of protection +1, wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges), 300 gp of onyx gems (for *animate dead* spells), 150 gp.

Advanced canoloth (3): CR 10; Large outsider (evil, extraplanar, yugoloth); HD 12d8+84; hp 138 each; Init +3; Spd 50 ft.; AC 19, touch 8, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +12; Grp +25; Atk +21 melee (1d8+9 plus paralysis, tongue); Full Atk +21 melee (1d8+9 plus paralysis, tongue) and +16 melee (2d6+4, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft. (30 ft. with tongue); SA improved grab, paralysis, spell-like abilities, summon yugoloth; SQ blindsight 40 ft., damage reduction 5/good, immunities, resistance to cold 10, fire 10, and electricity 10, spell resistance 18, telepathy 100 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 28, Dex 8, Con 24, Int 5, Wis 17, Cha 12; *Monster Manual III* 200.

Skills: Hide +10, Jump +32, Listen +18, Move Silently +14, Spot +18.

Feats: Ability Focus (paralysis), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (tongue), Track[B], Weapon Focus (tongue).

Languages: Abyssal, Draconic, Infernal.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the canoloth must hit with its tongue. It can pull a grabbed opponent of Large or smaller size into its mouth in the same round and make a bite attack.

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a canoloth's tongue must make a DC 25 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 minutes. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): At will—*cause fear* (DC 12), *desecrate, detect good, detect magic*. Caster level 5th.

Summon Yugoloth (Sp): once per day, a canoloth can attempt to summon a mezzoloth or 1d3 canoloths with a 40% chance of success.

Blindsight (Ex): Canoloths can ascertain all foes within 40 feet as a sighted creature would. Beyond that range they treat all targets as having total concealment. Negating a canoloth's senses of hearing or smell reduces this ability to normal Blind-Fight (as the feat); negating both blinds the creature.

Immunities (Ex): Canoloths are immune to gaze attacks, visual effects, sight-based illusions, and other attack forms that rely on sight. All yugoloths are immune to poison and acid.

Advanced mezzoloth (4): CR 12; Large outsider (evil, extraplanar, yugoloth); HD 19d8+133; hp 218 each; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 23, touch 10, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +19; Grp +30; Atk +22 melee (1d8+13, *+1 trident* with 5-point Power Attack); Full Atk +18/+13/+8/+3 melee (1d8+13, *+1 trident* with 5-point Power Attack) and +18 melee (1d8+9, 2 *+1 tridents* with 5-point Power Attack) and +17 melee (1d6+8, spiked shield with 5-point Power Attack); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA spell-like abilities, summon yugoloth; SQ damage reduction 10/good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison and acid, resistance to cold 10, fire 10, and electricity 10, spell resistance 22, telepathy 100 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +18, Ref +12, Will +11; Str 24, Dex 13, Con 25, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Hide +19, Intimidate +24, Jump +11, Knowledge (the planes) +20, Listen +22, Move Silently +23, Spot +22.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (trident), Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Bash, Multiweapon Fighting, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (trident).

Languages: Abyssal, Draconic, Infernal.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): At will—*cause fear* (DC 13), *darkness, desecrate, produce flame, see invisibility*; 2/day—*cloudkill* (DC 17), *dispel magic, greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only). Caster level 10th (14th for *greater teleport*).

Summon Yugoloth (Sp): Once per day, a mezzoloth can attempt to summon another mezzoloth with a 40% chance of success.

Possessions: Three *+1 tridents, +1 heavy steel spiked shield.*

T'kes Deathhand, male half-fiend flind fighter 10: CR 15; Medium outsider (native); HD 2d8+16 plus 10d10+70; hp 150; Init +4; Spd 20 ft.,

Exotic Weapon—Flindbar

A flindbar resembles a pair of chain-linked iron bars, not unlike a flail. This one-handed exotic weapon costs 30 gp, deals 2d4 points of bludgeoning damage, has a threat range of 19–20, deals double damage on a critical hit, and weighs 2 pounds. Flinds treat a flindbar as a martial weapon instead of an exotic weapon.

The wielder of a flindbar gains a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an enemy (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails). If a proficient wielder threatens a critical hit, he can make a free disarm attempt againt that opponent before confirming the critical hit (this disarm attempt doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity).

fly 30 ft. (average); AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +11; Grp +19; Atk +23 melee (2d4+12/17–20, *+2 defending flindbar*) or +16 ranged (1d8+9/×3, *+1 composite longbow*); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (2d4+12/17–20, *+2 defending flindbar*) and +17/+12 melee (1d4+4, spiked shield bash) and +14 melee (1d6+4, bite), or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+9/×3, *+1 composite longbow*); SA smite good 1/day (+12 damage), spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 22; AL NE; SV Fort +18, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 26, Dex 18, Con 26, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 15; *Monster Manual III* 62.

Skills: Intimidate +17 (+19 against gnolls), Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +17.

Feats: Combat Expertise[B], Combat Reflexes, Greater Weapon Focus (flindbar)[B], Improved Critical (flindbar), Improved Disarm, Improved Shield Bash, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Iron Will, Two Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (flindbar)[B], Weapon Specialization (flindbar)[B].

Languages: Common, Gnoll, Infernal.

Possessions: *+3 spiked breastplate, +3 light steel spiked shield, +2 defending flindbar, +1 composite longbow* (+8 Str) with 20 arrows, *amulet of health +4, ring of protection +1*, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds, potion of displacement, potion of haste*, 120 pp.

Deathhand's Descent

When T'kes Deathhand decides to invade Aknar Ratalla's tomb, chances are that he doesn't suspect the PCs are within. He expects to encounter a large number of ogres in the upper reaches, and suspects there are a fair number of undead and outsiders to fight in the tomb itself, along with a large number of dangerous traps. The first group T'kes sends into the caves is the scout squad. These gnolls and canoloths sneak into the area to scout ahead, disarming any traps they find and retreating once they get to any obvious opponents or an insurmountable barrier. If the scouts meet opposition or a blockade, they return to report to T'kes, who sends an appropriate squad back in to take care of the situation. Against opponents, he sends in a gnoll squad. If they fail to report back, he sends a second. If this second group fails, he sends in

the secondary assault squad, followed by the primary assault squad. Only if all four of these groups fail does he investigate himself with his two mezzoloth bodyguards. If any of his squads meet strong resistance in the form of powerful outsiders, he sends in the ark bearer squad to dismiss the outsiders.

As the squads encounter the PCs or any monsters in the cave, play out the encounters (allowing the PCs to control the indigenous monsters in those battles). T'kes doesn't relent once he begins his assault. He pushes his squads until they are defeated, following up their defeat with a tougher squad or a specialized squad as appropriate. Only when the half-fiend himself is slain does the assault collapse; any surviving gnolls and yugoloths panic and flee into the wilderness should T'kes fall.

Some specific tactics Deathhand and his gnolls might use to counter probable defenses the PCs set up are detailed below. Use these tactics as inspiration for further countermeasures against PC defenses as necessary.

- **The PCs Cut Down the Bridge in Area 4**: T'kes sends a gnoll squad and the scout squad into area **3** with a large amount of rope and construction equipment. The canoloth can take 10 on its Jump check and leap over the chasm with some gear and a gnoll or two on its back. A scout disarms the wyverntail trap, and then the gnolls and the jumping canoloth work to string some ropes back and forth to fashion a crude rope bridge. This takes 15 minutes to finish, and the resulting bridge is fairly unstable (requiring a DC 10 Balance check to cross), but it serves well enough to grant the gnolls access to the rest of the complex.

- **The PCs Use Ranged Weapons in Areas 7–8**: If the gnolls are having trouble getting through area **7** because the PCs are sniping them from cover through the arrow slits, they can fashion crude tower shields from the equipment at their campsite. Construction of the shields takes a half hour, but once they're done, the gnolls march them up against the walls and hold them there, blocking the arrow slits while their allies move further into the tomb. If this plan doesn't work, T'kes sends the mezzoloths from the primary assault squad into the room, and they teleport into area **8A** to deal with the snipers more directly.

- **The PCs Barricade Doors**: If the PCs barricade doors, seal them with *arcane locks*, or otherwise use magic to erect barricades, the gnolls respond by building a ram. Constructing a ram from the trees outside takes an hour. Rules for rams appear on page 100 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*. If the gnolls need to get beyond area **8** of the tomb with a ram, they'll need to build a half-size ram that deals a base of 3d6 damage and only allows half as many characters to operate it at once.

Concluding the Adventure

If T'kes is able to get hold of the relics, he quickly becomes a terrible menace. The *Black Blade* finds its desires coincide quite well with those of T'kes, and together the two quickly build a terrible army indeed. Although T'kes eventually wishes to destroy his father with the blade, he spends several months raiding and looting caravans, towns, and fortresses to collect more magic items and power, spreading despair and devastation far and wide in the process.

If T'kes is defeated but not destroyed, he vows to destroy the PCs as painfully as possible. In a fit of rage, he might fall on Barilon himself and do considerable damage before heading back to his remaining troops. He could easily become a recurring villain, attacking the PCs' loved ones or showing up as an ally to one of their other enemies.

The PCs might take it upon themselves to try to destroy the *Black Blade of Aknar Ratalla*. Remember that a powerful alliance of devils and angels long ago could not discover a means to destroy the artifact. This doesn't mean that the PCs can't discover this information, but doing so should be an adventure in and of itself. Perhaps the only person who knows how to destroy the blade is Eli Tomorast (see "Maure Castle" in *DUNGEON* #112), or maybe such a task requires the assistance of a powerful scion of chaos like Bazim-Gorag the Firebringer (see "Prison of the Firebringer" in *DUNGEON* #101). If the relic is destroyed, Aknar Ratalla's soul might be destroyed as well, or it might merely be freed to become a new and even more terrible menace.

Scaling the Adventure

While "Tomb of Aknar Ratalla" is designed for four characters of 14th-level, it can be modified for lower-level and higher-level characters. Don't forget to adjust the treasure found in the adventure appropriately.

The easiest method to adjust the adventure to lower- or higher-level play is to reduce or increase NPC character levels by a number equal to the deviation of the average party level from 14th. Specific changes to the adventure are detailed below.

13th-Level Characters: Reduce the Search and Disable Device DCs for the traps by 1, and reduce damage done by 1d6 for traps that do multiples of d6 damage. Remove Hronth from area **3**. Reduce the number of advanced will-o'-wisps in area **4** to 6. Remove one of the bonespider swarms from area **16**. Replace Tessakar with an 8th-level paladin hound archon, and Eistach with a barbed devil. When T'kes assaults the tomb, play his gnoll minions with a little less tactics and cooperation; perhaps squads flee battles if half of their number is slain.

15th–16th-Level Characters: Increase the Search and Disable Device DCs for the traps by 1 or 2. Add a second troll ranger to area **3**. If you're feeling particularly cruel, you can add the ghost template to the advanced will-o'-wisps in area **4**. Add 2 or 3 evolved advanced spectres to area **7**, and advance the stone golem's hit dice by 4–8. Give Tessakar 2 levels of paladin, and give Eistach 4 levels of rogue. Finally, when T'kes assaults the tomb, consider giving him a few more mezzoloth minions, or perhaps even a few nycaloths (even more powerful yugoloths from *Monster Manual III*).

Appendix One: New Monster

Bonespider Swarm

Diminutive Outsider (Swarm)
Hit Dice: 16d8+16 (88 hp)
Initiative: +11
Speed: 40 ft., climb 40 ft.
Armor Class: 23 (+4 size, +7 Dex, +2 natural), touch 21, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +16/—
Attack: Swarm (3d6 plus 3d6 negative energy)
Full Attack: Swarm (3d6 plus 3d6 negative energy)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Distraction, negative energy, terror
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., death ward, immune to cold, immune to weapon damage, low-light vision, spell resistance 18, swarm traits
Saves: Fort +13, Ref +19, Will +15
Abilities: Str 2, Dex 24, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 17, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +23, Jump +19, Listen +22, Spot +22
Feats: Ability Focus (distraction), Ability Focus (terror), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or colony (2–8)
Challenge Rating: 9
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

This swarm of pale white spiders looks far more disturbing upon closer observation. Their abdomens are pulpy and fat, but their legs are long, thin, and look disturbingly like finger bones, reaching a span of nearly six inches. Its head combines the features of a spider's face and a human skull, from which protrude a pair of sharp mandibles.

A bonespider swarm consists of thousands of bony spiders that, despite their skeletal and spidery appearance, are not undead. They are, in fact, outsiders from the Negative Energy Plane.

Combat

A bonespider swarm operates on instinct and a rudimentary intelligence, although it does not possess a true and proper hive mind. When it notices a living creature, it immediately attempts to swarm over it, cutting away at flesh with its mandibles and absorbing energy with its pulsing abdomen.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature vulnerable to a bonespider swarm's damage that begins its turn with a swarm in its square is nauseated for 1 round; a DC 21 Fortitude save negates the effect. Even after a successful save, spell-casting or concentrating on spells within the area of a swarm requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level). Using skills requiring patience and concentration requires a DC 20 Concentration check. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Negative Energy (Su): A creature caught in a bonespider swarm takes 3d6 points of damage from negative energy in addition to the regular swarm damage. Undead are instead healed by this negative energy for an amount equal to what they would have normally taken.

Terror (Su): Once per minute, as a free action, a bonespider swarm can emit a pulse of soul-numbing terror. All creatures within 30 feet of the swarm

must make a successful DC 20 Will save or become paralyzed with horror for 1d6 rounds. Creatures inside one of the swarm's squares take a –4 penalty on this saving throw. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Death Ward (Su): A bonespider swarm is protected by a death ward effect at all times, giving it immunity to death spells, magical death effects, energy drain, and any negative energy effects.

Appendix Two: New Magic Items

Ark of Forced Return

This 200-pound gilded box has a fiery glyph suspended a few feet above its surface. An *ark of forced return* is generally carried by four bearers—one at each corner, with the *ark* itself taking up a square. The *ark* is sturdy and can be dropped as a free action, but it only functions when activated by four creatures in contact with it at the same time. Activating the ark is a standard action for these four creatures, who must all be divine spellcasters.

If creatures with the extraplanar subtype are within 30 feet of an *ark of forced return* when it is activated, they must succeed at a Will save (DC 20) or be sent back to their home plane.

Strong Abjuration; CL 16; Craft Wondrous Item, *dismissal*; Price 115,000 gp; Weight 200 lb.

Black Blade of Aknar Ratalla (Major Artifact)

The *Black Blade of Aknar Ratalla* was a powerful weapon in the ancient warlord's time, but with his death, his soul fused with the weapon and granted it a terrible intelligence. The adamantine sword bears intricate silvery etchings that arc along the blade. The hilt is bone-white, its pommel spiked and stained with blood. When the sword is in use, the blood of its victims flows along the engraved blade, seeping from the spikes in the pommel and leaving a trail of blood behind its wielder.

The *Black Blade* is a *+4 unholy wounding evil/good outsider bane adamantine bastard sword*. It is also intelligent, with an Intelligence of 10, a Wisdom of 18, and a Charisma of 18. The sword is neutral evil, and wishes only to continue Aknar Ratalla's crusade against the divine. The sword can speak and use telepathy, possesses darkvision to 120 feet and can hear as well as a human. Its Ego is 30.

The *Black Blade* grants its wielder *deathwatch* as long as the blade is held. It can be used to generate a *magic circle against good* at will, and can cast *darkness*, *locate object*, and *fear* three times a day each. Its special purpose is to slay divine spellcasters and divine entities and minions; as long as the wielder is fighting a divine spellcaster or an outsider, he gains a +2 luck bonus on attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks.

As a major artifact, the *Black Blade* is indestructible when faced with most attacks; the exact methods of its destruction are left to you to decide.

Overwhelming Transmutation; CL 20.

Jack writes, "I am from Delaware and have been killing PCs... er, running campaigns... since middle school. I designed this adventure to give my players a taste of what it feels like on the flip side of the dungeon crawl. My current goals include teaching my two children how to read a d4 and finding new ways to keep my current players screaming... er, entertained."

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By Peter Bergting

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NO HEROISM NEEDED TODAY. SOMEONE'S BEEN AT THE MAGIC BEAN STEW AGAIN.

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MASTERING THE GAME

STARTING A NEW CAMPAIGN (PART 6) CAMPAIGN GOALS

BY MONTE COOK
ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE HUNTER

Last month, I discussed DMing styles, specifically addressing the approaches a DM can take to shape the feel of the game—from the dispassionate referee to the involved storytelling guide. Defining the DM's style defines, for the players, what to expect. Managing player expectations is a vitally important task for the DM, and there is in fact more to it than just style. This month we'll examine the campaign's goals.

Now, by "goals," I don't mean "defeat the evil lord Navrus" or "amass a vault full of gold and jewels." Those are character goals. In this instance, I mean the metagame goal of the campaign. Is it to create an epic story like out of a fantasy novel, or to just have a good, relaxing time? Or is it something in between?

Like in the last column, there are not a lot of right or wrong answers here—but it is still important to ask yourself the questions.

REALISM, BELIEVABILITY, AND FUN

When I examined DM styles last time, I looked back at the "old school" of gaming and compared it with differing outlooks that developed later. I'd like to do that here as well, but it's a little more complex a web to unravel.

Roleplaying games evolved from wargames, and because of that—and the impression of wargames that many roleplayers have—a gaming style that emphasizes tactical movement, a "realistic" treatment of weapons, armors and wounds, and so forth has become known as "wargamey." The assumption is often that those early campaigns started out more wargamey. Only later, the theory goes, did they evolve into an enterprise that emphasized storytelling and fun over "realism."

But it's not nearly so simple. Looking back at the early days of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, one sees an abundance of—for lack of a better word, but I assure you I write it with no negative connotations—goofy fun. This is true not so much in the rules, but in the subsequent adventures and the way play was encouraged. (And in the early days, unlike today, most products were adventures, not rulebooks.) For example, you almost can't find a dungeon from the old days without a room where those passing through it have to move like chess pieces or they get zapped, rooms where the gravity is reversed, buttons that give random magical boons or curses, or magical pools that grant wishes or alternatively turn to poison. There's nothing "realistic" or even wargamey about such things. They're just fun. In some people's minds, though, they're too silly to put in their own campaigns—and that's OK, too. You wouldn't find a room that spins like a food processor to grind up adventurers in the *Lord of the Rings*, for example. (Some DMs apply this to monsters as well. Orcs and wyverns are OK, but beholders are just too over-the-top for them.)

So when people today look back on older game styles, they tend to think of them as stilted and cumbersome, but that's because they looked at the rules (weapons vs. armor types, complicated subsystems for morale, and so forth) and not at the adventures. There was a disconnect between the way that old-school gaming presented itself, and how the games actually played.

Newer DM styles that focus on storylines and character development eschew reverse gravity castles of fire because it's difficult to imagine a reason for them in a believable world. In this kind of campaign, the DM chooses to say no to something that might be fun in the name of "realism" (or at least believability). There might be a more loose adherence to the rules, but perhaps more—not less—focus on "realism" or the simulation of reality.

In today's RPG market, there are more rulebooks than adventures. While an adventure can encourage any number of different play styles, rulebooks almost always stress the simulation of reality, because that's what rules do. This change in the kind of RPG product available all

by itself seems to have changed the face of gaming.

So it's actually a complicated spectrum rather than a simple yes/no or black/white kind of question. The job for the DM is to define—even in his or her own head—the boundaries of the campaign regarding believability and fun.

What is your goal for the campaign? To have fun? Sure. (If that's not at least one of your goals, you need to perhaps re-examine what you're doing.) To simulate reality? Maybe. To tell an epic tale? Maybe. To provide challenges for your players? Probably.

These may seem like easy questions, but it's worth the time to examine them more closely.

FUN

Fun is, of course, relative. What's fun to one person isn't fun to another. In this context, however, I specifically mean things that would be fun (or sometimes funny) additions to a campaign but specifically would not be very "realistic." While every campaign should be fun, what are you willing to sacrifice in the name of fun? A dungeon full of goofy traps that *polymorph* characters and switch their personalities around and force them to walk on burning ropes over huge vats of acid can be lots of fun, but you can't have that in the same campaign as a stark, gritty adventure where the players are expected to react to people and events based on believable motivations or understandings. Or at least you probably shouldn't. It goes back to managing player expectations. Plenty of players will go either way you lead, but will be confused if you try to do both.

As a DM, you have to determine where you draw the line. For example, it might be fun to have the PCs' arch-enemy show up in the alternate dimension they are exploring just at a critical moment, but if the players are going to be forced to ask a lot of questions about how the villain could have possibly found them, let alone reached them (and just at that moment), you might not want to do it. Having an NPC talk in a very silly voice or act exactly like Arnold Schwarzenegger can also be fun, but it can also take away from the seriousness of the game, if that's something you're after.

So, how goofy is too goofy? What goes too far to be believable? That's really a question everyone has to answer for themselves, but consider this:

1. Does the world seem consistent? This is the real crux of the issue here. If strange magical traps or bizarre coincidences are par for the course, then the sky's the limit. If such a thing seems out of the blue and contrary to everything else you've presented in the game, it's a problem.

   If you've laid out a complex political structure in your world, and you've developed plotlines involving the plight of the serfs and bandits raiding shipments of iron ore with careful attention to how it might work in the real world, you might want to reconsider having an adventure based around a mad wizard that creates a dungeon full of chessboard-based traps and rooms where gravity shifts from floor to ceiling in random patterns. While fun, those kinds of things probably don't fit into the world you've created.

2. Can the players justify in their own minds that the event, monster, encounter, or situation you have presented could/would happen in the world you've created? Most players are willing to go a long way to stretch their own suspension of disbelief. They'll justify a lot all by themselves to maintain a feeling of verisimilitude. They're most likely fantasy fans, after all, so they're used to it. (You can't, for example, be a *Star Trek* fan without coming up with your own rationales to explain things every once in a while.) The trick is simply learning how far your individual players will go, and to never push them past that point—unless you have your own justification for the unbelievable thing ready to present to them within the context of the game.

3. Do the players trust you? If you've had a campaign going for a while with the same players and they appreciate how you run things, you can afford to throw them a few surprises (believability-wise) and they'll go along with you. For example, if you're running a moderately believable game and you suddenly have the PCs thrust into a bizarre world like something from *Alice in Wonderland*, the players may very well go along with you, simply assuming that it will all make sense in the end. Remember, though, trust is earned. If the players assume that it will make sense, make sure that it eventually does.

SIMULATION

In a weird way, simulation is almost the antithesis of fun. That's not to say that believable things aren't fun, but it does mean that the things that are most fun (in the broadest sense of the word) are probably not slavish simulations. Careful, exacting attempts at recreating reality are often not all that fun.

Most DMs attempt to reach a middle ground. This middle ground is usually located on a spot of turf otherwise known as "just 'realistic' enough to be believable, but no more." Why? Because simulating reality is hard. It almost always involves a great deal of time, either on the DM's part as he prepares for the game (doing research and a lot of forethought), or in the middle of the game resolving actions. Or both.

If the players are all history buffs or physicists (or both), however, you may have to err more on the side of simulation. Still, it can be helpful to make sure that your players understand that your campaign isn't actually taking place in Medieval Europe (unless of course it is, in which case you've got your work cut out for you) and historical or real world scientific knowledge is only of so much use.

STORY

Many DMs describe their games as a joint story told together by everyone around the table. They set up heroic quests or amazing adventures like something from a fantasy novel and the players create heroes to undertake the brave deeds and face down the dire threats put forth in front of them.

A Change of Pace

While consistency is important, sometimes the players (and you) just need a slight change of pace. Don't be afraid to modify your goal outlook a little now and again just for variety's sake. A serious, epic quest against the forces of the Demon Queen can certainly use a side trek on a lighter note, or even just the introduction of a memorable, goofy NPC played for comedic effect.

If this is the campaign's goal, more so than any of the other goals here you have to keep your focus. While fun and simulation and challenge can all be a part of the story, you don't want any of them detracting from it. You don't want your story to get bogged down with minor details or derailed by some wacky magic encounter you threw in on the spur of the moment.

On the other hand, when you're playing a roleplaying game, sometimes stories just happen. As the players roleplay their characters and you the NPCs, as the PCs face incredible challenges and reap their rewards, a wonderful tale is created all by itself. This doesn't always happen, though. Sometimes a campaign ends up being a more disconnected set of events, battles, and other encounters (and that can be OK, too).

CHALLENGE

Some DMs don't worry so much about presenting a story worthy of a novel, and instead simply focus on running a campaign that engages and challenges the players. These challenges can come in the form of tough combats to win, but just as often might be puzzles or mysteries to solve of one kind or another.

Obviously, every campaign should have challenges. It's what the experience point system is based on. Without challenges, things get boring quickly. What the DM has to decide, however, is the importance of challenging the players, as well as the characters.

Sometimes, a puzzle or mystery scenario can get bogged down, and the DM will consider giving the players hints to keep the game moving—all in the name of fun. Is this the kind of game you want to run, or do the players have to fend for themselves—overcoming their challenges all on their own?

In a way, this relates back to the DMing styles discussed in the last column. Are you willing to sacrifice the story in order to give the players real challenge (the mystery story falls flat on its face if the PCs don't solve it), or not?

SO MANY THINGS TO CONSIDER

Ultimately, you just have to decide for yourself (keeping the players' wishes in mind) how you want to run your campaign. Remember, though, that the goal you choose also directs the players on how to react to things. Don't expect them to take an over-the-top silly campaign seriously, just as you wouldn't want them cracking jokes and doing goofy things in your serious game.

Running a campaign that is somewhere in between is the tricky part, though, and that's probably where most of us want to end up. The best way to handle this is to communicate these goals to your players, either directly or through the way you present the world. There is no applicable scale or rating you can assign your campaign. You can't say, "I'm going to be running a type 7 campaign," to your players and get any kind of understanding. You can, however, be straightforward about your goals. "In this game, I'm going to worry less about making sure everything is completely realistic so that I can spend more time on making things fun," or "My goal, when we're done with the campaign, is to have created an epic tale of adventure, terror, and ultimately (if all goes well) triumph."

If you don't want to do that, or perhaps in addition to that, you can communicate your goals through the details of the campaign itself. If the players learn of the long, detailed history of the mining guild of the Dragonclaw Mountains, they're going to see the kind of believable detail you're putting into the campaign. Conversely, if they find out that the jewel they seek lies in the Dungeon of Penultimate Doom, they'll have a good idea that you're trying to set a more casual tone.

Remember that the players aren't your opponents, or at least they don't have to be. This kind of information does not fall into the category of "DM secrets." Once a good player knows where you want the campaign to go, they'll work with you to help you get it there.

Next Time: What drives the campaign? We'll take a look at campaigns that are player-driven versus those that follow a rough path set out by the DM. Are your players self-starters or do they need a shove in the right direction?

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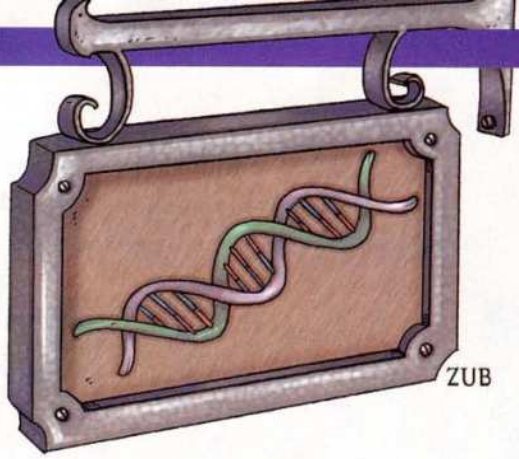
"Realism"

Throughout this column, I've put the words "realism" and "realistic" in quotes, because when one applies these terms to roleplaying games the quotes are very much deserved. Games with wizards turning creatures into other creatures, spaceships that fly faster than the speed of light, or men in capes flying through the sky are not "realistic." But it's more than that. Any attempt to simulate the damage a physical body can take using points or ratings always falls far short of the mark, and likewise so do attempts to quantify how quickly and efficiently a person can do something in a given amount of time. These are important game aspects, and are usually driven by the needs of the game first and by a simulation of reality second—sometimes a far second. The more accurate a simulation that's attempted, the slower and more cumbersome the game becomes.

Most games and gamers make an attempt at a simulation of reality, and some stress the simulation more than others. "A simulation of reality" is a far more appropriate way of saying it than "realistic," because it accurately addresses the fact that game rules are never truly "realistic." "Believability" or "verisimilitude" are perhaps even better terms. A game can contain unrealistic elements, but can still be believable. A wizard's *fireball* isn't real, but—assuming one can leap the mental hurdle of suspension of disbelief—a DM can attempt to make the situation involving the *fireball* believable. He can describe how the environment and creatures near the *fireball* react in believable ways. Even if the situation is itself unrealistic. Similarly, hit points—while wildly unrealistic—can be used as tool to help a DM describe wounds and healing in a believable way.



SPELLS FOR SALE

BY RUSSELL BROWN
ILLUSTRATION BY JIM ZUBKAVICH

Do your players need a spellcaster to cure a disease, restore lost abilities, turn stone back to flesh, or raise someone from the dead? Are they looking for a particular potion, scroll, or magic item? Well, they've come to the right place. Here are three merchant spellcasters who are ready to set up shop in your towns and cities or take their spells and item creation abilities on the road.

To determine what these NPCs charge for their spellcasting services, see NPC Spellcasting, *Dungeon Master's Guide* 107.

GARSYTH

Garsyth is a soft-spoken, redheaded half-elf sorcerer raised among sylvan elves, deep in the forest. He specializes in gathering information and seeking retribution through spells like *geas/quest* and *baleful polymorph*.

Garsyth has the Leadership feat with a Leadership score of 19. He has attracted a large group of followers, including a muscular bard named Phantu and a small army of rogues and sellswords who call themselves the Viper's Head. See the Leadership table, *Dungeon Master's Guide* 106.

Garsyth, male half-elf sorcerer 14: CR 14; Medium humanoid; HD 14d4+14; hp 49; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Base Attack +7; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d6, *+1 vermin bane sickle*) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6, *+1 vermin bane sickle*) or +10 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA spells, *scry on familiar*; SQ low-light vision, immunity to *sleep* spells, summon familiar; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +14, Concentration +13, Craft (papermaking) +6, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +9, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +7, Profession (bookkeeper) +4, Search +4, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +18, Spot +4.

Feats: Alertness[B], Eschew Materials, Investigator, Leadership, Negotiator, Scribe Scroll.

Languages: Common, Sylvan, Elven.

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/7/7/5/3; caster level 14): 0—*arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, read magic*; 1st—*comprehend languages, identify, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*invisibility, levitate, locate object, resist energy, scorching ray* (+9 ranged touch); 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, lightning bolt* (DC 18), *nondetection* (DC 18), *tongues*; 4th—*lesser geas* (DC 19), *greater invisibility, remove curse, scrying* (DC 19); 5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 20), *break enchantment, contact other plane*;

6th—*legend lore, stone to flesh*; 7th—*limited wish* (DC 21).

Possessions: +1 vermin bane sickle, masterwork light crossbow, *cloak of Charisma +2, ring of protection +2, bracers of armor +2*, scroll of *invisibility*, scroll of *lightning bolt*.

Bat Familiar (H'wellin): hp 24; *Monster Manual* 268.

Phantu, male human bard 12: CR 12; Medium humanoid; HD 12d6+12; hp 54; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Attack +9; Grp +13; Atk +14 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d6 electricity/19–20, *+1 shock longsword*); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d6 electricity/19–20, *+1 shock longsword*); SA *fascinate*, spells, *suggestion*; SQ bardic knowledge +13, bardic music, countersong, inspire competence, inspire courage +2, inspire greatness, song of freedom; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 18.

Skills: Concentration +15, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +14, Hide +14, Knowledge (local) +16, Listen +10, Move Silently +14, Perform (wind instruments) +21, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +14.

Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Iron Will, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Stealthy.

Languages: Common, Elven.

Bard Spells Known (3/4/4/4/3, caster level 12): 0—*light, mage hand, mending, message, read magic, summon instrument*; 1st—*cure light wounds, expeditious retreat, identify, sleep* (DC 15); 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, heroism, invisibility, tongues*; 3rd—*cure serious wounds, lesser geas* (DC 17), *good hope, see invisibility*; 4th—*greater invisibility, legend lore, zone of silence* (DC 18).

Possessions: +1 shock longsword, masterwork studded leather armor, *+2 ring of protection*, *wand of magic missile*, scroll of *expeditious retreat*, masterwork flute.

BEADLE JEP

Jep is a cleric of Fharlanghn charged with protecting and helping travelers. Usually he can be found at the local temple of Fharlanghn, but he serves for months at a time at a roadside shrine far out in the wilderness. He charges for his spellcasting like any other merchant caster, but most of the money goes to support Fharlanghn's shrines and inns.

Jep is a neutral cleric, but has chosen healing spells as his spontaneous casting ability. Jep can also cast *raise dead*, but he doesn't prepare that spell every day. Instead, he casts *gentle repose* if needed, then prepares *raise dead* the next day.

Jep is a good cook, and his waistline suffers from it. He covers his elven chain with a threadbare robe and hooded cape so thieves won't be tempted.

Beadle Jep, male human cleric 9: CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d8+9; hp 50; Init –1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16; Base Attack +6; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d6+1, *+1 quarterstaff*) or +9 ranged (1d4, masterwork sling); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6, *+1 quarterstaff*) or +9 ranged (1d4, masterwork sling); SA spells, turn undead 5/day; SQ—; AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +17, Diplomacy +8, Heal +12, Listen +5, Profession (cook) +6, Spellcraft +10, Spot +5, Survival +12.

Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Eschew Materials, Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll.

Languages: Common, Elven.

Spells Prepared (caster level 9): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, light, purify food and drink, read magic*; 1st—*bless, comprehend languages, endure elements, longstrider*[D], *obscuring mist, shield of faith*; 2nd—*delay poison, enthrall* (DC 15), *gentle repose, lesser restoration, shield other*[D], *zone of truth* (DC 15); 3rd—*create food and water, dispel magic, fly*[D], *invisibility purge, remove disease*; 4th—*dimension door*[D], *neutralize poison, restoration*; 5th—*flame strike* (DC 17), *teleport*[D].

Domains: Protection (protective ward grants +9 resistance bonus on next save 1/day), Travel (*freedom of movement* up to 9 rounds/day; Survival is a class skill).

Possessions: +1 quarterstaff, elven chain, *+1 light wooden shield*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of resist elements*, scroll of *summon monster III*, scroll of *water breathing*, light horse.

FACIVIS

Facivis is a wizard who has taken up magic item crafting when he is not adventuring with a group of local heroes. He is well known for his beautiful *boots of elvenkind, boots of speed, boots of teleportation*, and *winged boots*, and can create a *staff of fire*.

Facivis is short for an elf, standing just over 4 feet tall. He spends little time on personal grooming, and other elves find his unkempt appearance an embarrassment.

Facivis, male elf wizard 12: CR 12; Medium humanoid; HD 12d4 plus 3; hp 33; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Attack +6; Grp +5; Atk +6 melee (1d4/17–20, *+1 keen dagger*); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d4/17–20, *+1 keen dagger*); SA spells; SQ low-light vision, immunity to *sleep* spells, summon familiar; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 9, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +15, Craft (leatherworking) +14, Decipher Script +14, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (local) +14, Listen +2, Search +6, Spellcraft +19, Spot +2.

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Rod[B], Craft Staff, Craft Wand[B], Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll[B], Toughness.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Sylvan.

Spells Prepared (caster level 12): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, light, mending*; 1st—*expeditious retreat, identify, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*arcane lock, cat's grace, invisibility, levitate, resist energy*; 3rd—*fireball* (2) (DC 17), *fly, haste, protection from energy*; 4th—*arcane eye, greater invisibility, shout* (DC 18), *stoneskin*; 5th—*fabricate, summon monster V, teleport*; 6th—*chain lightning* (DC 20), *greater heroism*.

Spellbook: 0—all cantrips; 1st—*alarm, burning hands, expeditious retreat, feather fall, identify, mage armor, magic missile, shield, true strike*; 2nd—*arcane lock, cat's grace, invisibility, levitate, resist energy*; 3rd—*explosive runes, fireball, fly, haste, protection from energy*; 4th—*arcane eye, greater invisibility, shout, stoneskin, wall of fire*; 5th—*fabricate, seeming, summon monster V, teleport*; 6th—*chain lightning, geas/quest, greater heroism, stone to flesh*.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +2, +1 keen dagger, boots of speed, ring of protection +2, staff of fire, 3 vials of diamond dust worth 250 gp each (spell component for *stoneskin*).

ENEMIES AT THE GATE

BY MARK NEMETH
ILLUSTRATION BY JIM ZUBKAVICH

For weary adventuring parties heavily laden with hard-earned loot from a long expedition, there is no more welcome sight than the gates of their home city. Yet passage through the gates of a city is not just a fitting conclusion to a party's most recent exploits, it can also launch them on a new adventure. As the player characters enter the city, you can sow the seeds of future plotlines and engage the party in interesting encounters.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE GATE

The only certainties at a city gate are guards and taxes.

Guards stationed at a city gate are not paid to think, but to keep out undesirables. A typical city guard force consists of low-level fighters or warriors, directed by a few more powerful officers. They wield their authority as a blunt instrument, using their position to get their way by bullying common townsfolk. In general, maintaining order takes priority over establishing justice. Guards will take immediate and decisive action to quell large-scale civil disturbances, such as riots and arson, while they turn a blind eye to most of the crimes committed against individual members of the city's underclass.

In addition to controlling entry, a city's gates serve as a convenient place to collect taxes. The most commonly levied taxes are import tariffs on goods intended for sale (including magic items, of course). Officials typically charge rates of five to ten percent of the sale price. If the city is in need of extra income, it may charge even higher tariffs, and the city's government often becomes more creative

in taxing travelers. Taxes could potentially be assessed for bringing mounts or other livestock into the city, or for bearing weapons or magic items. Rates for foreigners may significantly exceed those for locals. Taxes imposed for entry to a city are a great way to relieve player characters of excess cash, especially if the party has unusual equipment or plans to conduct any business that's out of the ordinary.

EIGHT GATE ENCOUNTERS

1. One of the PCs is mistaken for a wanted criminal by the city guard, either based on a similar appearance or an identical name. The guards immediately attempt to apprehend the PC, using force if necessary. If captured, the unfortunate PC is held in custody until his real identity is proven or until the proper bribes are offered (or both). Of course, to prove his innocence it may be necessary for the remaining party members to capture the real criminal.

2. While the party is outside the city waiting to go through the gates, a smuggler places some contraband in one of the PC's packs, hoping that he or she unwittingly transports it into the city. If the guards discover the illegal item, the PC will have to do some fast-talking—or quickly identify the actual smuggler—to avoid facing criminal charges. On the other hand, if the contraband is successfully carried into the city, the smuggler attempts to recover it later. This could result in the smuggler being mistaken for a common pickpocket or could escalate to an urban brawl between the party and the smuggler's gang, depending on whether the smuggler attempts to act through stealth or force. The contraband items could also be valuable or intriguing in their own right, possibly leading to further adventures.

3. Just as the party attempts to enter the city, a madman or an escaped convict dashes out through the gates, narrowly avoiding immediate capture by the guards. If the party aids the guards in capturing the escapee, they are suitably appreciative, and the party receives a warm welcome from the city authorities. Of course, the party might later discover that they have helped apprehend an innocent person who has been unjustly persecuted by the city's rulers. If the party members aid the escapee in the initial encounter, they are immediately accosted by the city guard and charged with abetting a known criminal. Even a party that takes no action could potentially be made a scapegoat through an accusation of helping the escapee by impeding the guards' pursuit.

4. A recent war or a nearby border skirmish causes the city guards to attempt to conscript the PCs into military service. The conscription can only be avoided by demonstrating proof of important business in the city, paying exorbitant bribes, or prevailing over the guards in combat. If the party members are defeated or otherwise allow themselves to be conscripted, their valuables are confiscated and they are immediately shipped off to the front lines.

5. The PCs are forced to register as foreigners and provide an excessive amount of detail about their plans in the city before they are allowed entry. If the party members appear to be engaged in any activity other than routine business, they are subjected to constant surveillance and harassment throughout their stay. In the event of any unusual crimes or civil disturbances, the city guard immediately makes the party the focus of the investigation.

6. The party is mistaken for a group of visiting dignitaries. Unless the PCs immediately clear up the confusion, they are treated deferentially and escorted to luxurious lodgings, where they are informed that they will be granted an audience with the city's ruler in a few hours. If the party members play along, they are subsequently taken to a private chamber for a meeting with high-ranking city officials who, after exchanging a few pleasantries, proceed to engage in negotiations about trade, border disputes, military conquest, or some similar topic. If they party members succeed in maintaining the guise of foreign diplomats—which should be quite difficult, since the negotiations involve extensive details—they may receive valuable political information or other state secrets. If the city officials discover the party's true nature, however, they will undoubtedly charge the PCs with espionage. The longer the party has maintained the ruse, the more severe their potential punishment becomes.

7. City laws require all weapons to be surrendered at the city gate, and the party members are denied entry unless they comply. Of course, there is a fee for storage, which is substantially higher for magic items, owing to the additional problems posed by their safekeeping (accidental discharge of charged items, increased need for prevention of theft, and so forth). Particularly valuable weapons may be pilfered by the city guard and sold to fences or kept for personal use. Alternately, the party may be asked to retrieve a stored or stolen item by its lawful owner, or the PCs may desire to steal whatever they can from the weapon storage facility for themselves.

8. Another traveler who was denied entry into the city begs the party to pass a message to an associate inside the city walls. This message might arrange a clandestine meeting outside of town, or it may be encoded to prevent the PCs from reading it. Depending on the nature of the traveler and his associate, the PCs might find anything from a greedy merchant to a desperate fugitive to a cunning spy to a fresh corpse to an ambush by the city guards when they try to deliver the message. If the PCs refuse, the traveler attempts to enter the city while the PCs are talking to the city guards, causing a commotion and possibly casting suspicion on the party.

SOUNDS OF THE UNDERWORLD

BY RUSSELL BROWN
ILLUSTRATION BY JIM ZUBKAVICH

To build more suspense in your campaign and give your players a greater sense of accomplishment, consider turning up the volume in your encounters. Describe what the PCs hear, not just what they see. A well-presented sound or two can give valuable clues while increasing tension. The scraping, slithering sound in the next room could mean many things, but players tend to imagine the worst.

AWARENESS

Typical players listen at a dungeon door before opening it, but otherwise it's up to you as the DM to call for Listen checks. Most of the time this happens when your players are unaware of a threat and are likely to hear it before they see it (for example orcs approaching through twisted tunnels, or an invisible stalker tracking its prey). But a Listen check can apply to environmental dangers as well. Does the party hear the rush of the waterfall up ahead of their boat or the creaking and snapping of the beams holding up that leaning statue?

In the case of the approaching orcs, it's easy for the DM to make an opposed check between their Move Silently skill and the PCs' Listen skill. But if the two parties are unaware of each other, are the orcs really trying to move silently? And is anyone in either party really

listening? Assuming both groups are walking and talking normally, the base DC to hear them is 0 or less, and the Move Silently skill does not apply. Are they in forest terrain or bad weather, where background noises make Listen checks more difficult? What armor check penalties apply?

If a party is trying to remain silent, whether it's your players or a group of lizard-riding kobolds waiting to ambush them, there is still more to consider than just the Move Silently skill. A failed Handle Animal check might mean the mounts are restless or noisy. A wizard or sorcerer casting a spell with verbal components (and no Silent Spell feat) or a bard singing or playing his instrument brings the Listen difficulty down to a normal conversation (DC 0) or worse. Birds may fly off and cry out in alarm at the party's approach. The PCs may have to open squeaking doors or pull levers that grind gears that haven't been oiled in centuries.

Listen checks shouldn't just apply to creatures. Try incorporating them into your traps. When the ceiling in the vaulted chamber begins to crumble and drop bricks on the party, declare anyone who fails a Listen check to be flat-footed for the ensuing attack rolls. When the door of the shrinking room locks behind your PCs, check whether anyone in the party hears the bolt click into place. If they succeed, give your rogue an extra round or two to open the lock before the walls start moving in.

ALARMS

Sounds can be used as alarms. Common alarm sounds range from guards at the dungeon entrance yelling when an enemy approaches to the barking of dogs tied up at the edge of a bandit camp.

Natural alarm systems are perhaps the simplest, and they can provide opportunities for a druid or ranger to shine. There may be shriekers growing in the sacred grove, or noisy bat swarms living in the unused back tunnel entrance to the castle. While a sorcerer sleeps (and possibly snores) his screech owl familiar may be watching, ready to cry out when its keen eyes spot strangers.

Magical alarms can be more reliable and more selective about who sets them off. An *alarm* spell enhanced with *permanency* warns of strangers like an automatic doorbell. A *glyph of warding* that triggers *shatter* or *sound burst* makes plenty of noise and can be limited to specific creature types or alignments.

Traps can also double as alarms. Even though they are primarily designed to harm their victims, they can also make considerable noise. A trespasser falling into a pit of spikes could be very loud, especially if they're wearing heavy armor. A portcullis dropping into place or chunks of masonry falling from the ceiling ought to be enough to alert any nearby intelligent creature that visitors have arrived.

INFORMATION

Besides alerting PCs or monsters to the presence of others, sounds can also provide information about their source. A good Listen check may reveal distance or precise direction. A character may use a relevant Knowledge skill to recognize a distinctive sound. Is that hissing coming from the snakes on a medusa's head or the acid dripping from a black dragon's jaws? Is that barking and yipping coming from a pack of dogs or a small army of gnolls planning an attack? Often, the noise a creature makes can tell you if it is moving, wounded, or sleeping.

Think carefully about the encounters in your adventures. What do they sound like? Do the giant's footsteps echo through his castle and shake the walls when he's on the second floor but not the first? Is a flight of harpies quiet when they think there is no prey nearby, or do they argue and fight over the little meat they have left? Does the lonely gynosphinx talk to herself, possibly giving eavesdropping rogues clues for an ensuing round of riddles?

Sounds can also be deliberate. A *magic mouth* could inform the player who just drank poison where to find the antidote. A bard held prisoner in a cellar could guide the PCs to his prison with *whispering wind* spells. A magic device could provide *clairaudience* at the location of a hidden treasure, emitting the roar of a waterfall and a croaking sound that a druid or bard might recognize as the call of a rare type of toad.

MISINFORMATION

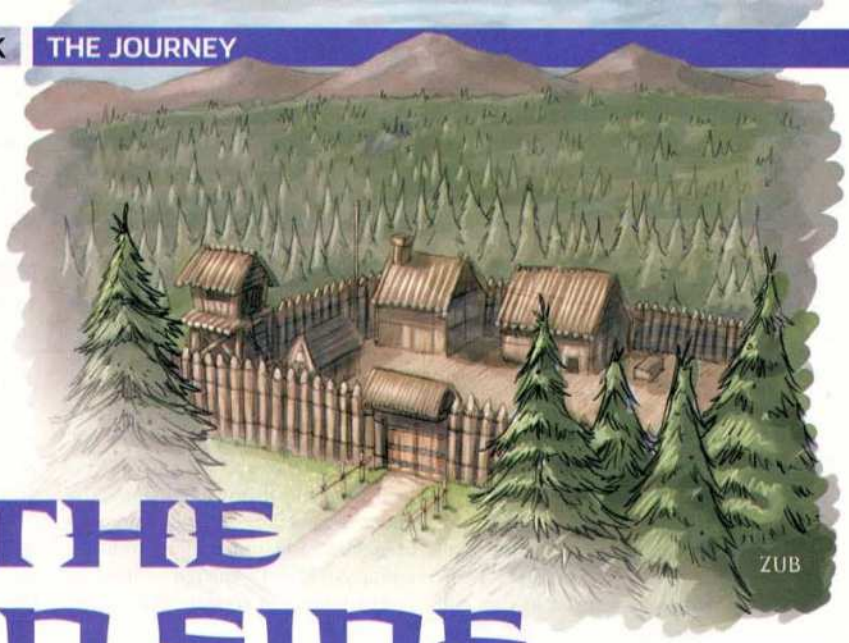
Though sound provides valuable information to those who are alert and discerning, it can also be used to misdirect. Have your players ever drawn guards away from their posts with a Bluff check and a *ghost sound*? Have they diverted enemies with *ventriloquism* or the clatter of an object dropped by *telekinesis*?

Distracting sounds can work just as well against the PCs, especially if they must earn the misinformation with a Listen check. A ranger out foraging might follow the voice of a friend or the call of a wild turkey, only to find himself face to face with a green hag. A crafty dragon might defend her lair by luring greedy PCs into a trap using a *ghost sound* of coins clinking. She might also have a *magic mouth* that lies to the PCs about her sleeping patterns.

ATMOSPHERE

Even if you have no specific information to convey to your PCs with sound, use sounds to build atmosphere in your descriptions and bring your encounters to life. The steady plink of dripping water could echo through every chamber of an underground lair. Laughing and snatches of conversation might be heard in the vermin-infested sewers below a tavern. The merchant who hires the PCs as bodyguards might have a cart with a squeaky wheel that alerts every creature they pass along their journey.

The important thing is not to forget about sound. Picture yourself in each encounter—what do you hear? Play mood music during your game sessions. Imitate the sounds of every spell and every creature and use props if necessary. Let's hear it!



ON THE WILD SIDE

CREATING FRONTIER OUTPOSTS FOR ANY SETTING

BY RODNEY THOMPSON
ILLUSTRATION BY JIM ZUBKAVICH

On the edge of the frontier, in the twilight between the wilderness and civilization, life can be tough even for the hardiest explorers. Frontier outposts help alleviate some of the difficulties of frontier life by giving adventurers a place to stop and re-supply before plunging into the unknown. These wilderness outposts are frequently little more than shacks or small clusters of temporary huts situated at the edge of the frontier and are, by most standards, rustic at best and primitive at worst. Their owners and operators are usually former explorers and frontiersmen who are familiar with the dangers of the untamed reaches of the world, and can often provide not only supplies but also advice (and possibly adventure hooks).

Frontier outposts often serve as all-purpose sites for those spending time on the edge of civilization. In addition to acting as a place to shop for basic survival goods, many frontier outposts also provide healing (often in crude, rudimentary forms), weapon and armor repair, and travel advice for adventurers passing through the area. While they take many forms, these outposts are all rough places where the people who live in the untamed wilds can come and obtain or trade goods. Most of their customers and owners lack the civility and cultural upbringing of those who were raised in tamer surroundings. As such, most adventurers will likely find these outposts to be far from the comfortable shopping environment they may be used to.

TRADE VALUE VS. GOLD VALUE

On the edge of civilization, the value of an item often changes according to its usefulness. In places where merely surviving is the biggest challenge faced by inhabitants, most outpost owners place little value on items that are purely decorative or nonfunctional, even if those items are incredibly rare and valuable when sold in the civilized world. One of the best examples of this is the concept of money; while most outpost owners recognize gold, silver, and other coins as valuable and as a basic unit of trade, many place a higher value on material goods than on money. In other words, a bundle of animal furs might be worth more at a frontier outpost than its normal equivalent value in gold. Traders almost always prefer to deal in goods rather than cash, and attempting to purchase goods with coin or other forms of money is less effective. Any goods purchased with coins or gems should cost 20% more than their standard value.

As a result, adventuring parties frequently find it more to their advantage to negotiate trade than to simply try to use money to purchase their items. A good way to deal with trading is to simply break down items into their normal coin value, and then compare the value of each side until both parties are satisfied (Dungeon Masters should always encourage both good roleplaying and use of the Bluff or Diplomacy skills during such negotiations). Additionally, certain modifiers can be applied to the value of each item depending on their availability or uses. Consult the table below for value modifiers for trade goods at outposts.

Trade Value Modifiers

Condition Modifier	GP Value
Item is necessary for survival (food, water, medicine)	+10%
Item is purely decorative/nonfunctional (paintings, jewelry)	–50%
Item is a luxury and has a use (spices, oils)	+20%
Item is rare (or available only seasonally) on the frontier	+10%
Item requires trained craftsman to produce	+10%
Item can be produced from materials common to the region	–10%

Example: A group of adventurers wishes to trade for 2 light horses (75 gp each) and some antitoxin (50 gp) for a poisoned comrade. Since the antitoxin is necessary for survival and requires a trained craftsman (in this case, an alchemist) to produce, the cost of the antitoxin increases by +20%, giving a vial a new value of 60 gp. However, horses are very common in this region and so they decrease in value by –10%, with a new value of 67 gp, 5 sp. The party must negotiate a trade for 195 gp worth of goods (60 + 67.5 + 67.5), or pay an extra 20% in actual gold, or 235 gp.

WHAT EVERY TRADING POST SELLS

There are certain items that are universally carried by almost every trading post. When an adventuring party arrives at an outpost, they are pretty much guaranteed to find these items well stocked. The following list can be made available to players who are shopping at the frontier outpost, and the adjusted cost on the table below indicates the changes made to reflect the different pricing mentioned in the section above.

Common Outpost Goods

Item	Adjusted Cost
Animal Feed (per day)	6 cp
Bedroll	2 sp
Blanket	5 sp
Healing (service)	10 gp
Map (local)	2 gp
Rations (per day)	6 sp
Tent	12 gp
Traveling Clothes	2 gp
Waterskin	2 gp
Weapon/Armor Repair (service)	5 sp

REGIONAL WARES

Some frontier outposts stock different goods related to the region and climate in which they are located. Often outposts on the edge of the frozen North carry goods to keep warm and dry, while those bordering arid deserts offer supplies to keep adventurers from dying of thirst of suffering heatstroke. Each region has its own frontier outposts and should ply different wares based on their particular environment.

Regional Goods

Item	Adjusted Cost	Region
Animal Furs	5 sp	Frozen/Cold Weather
Coal	1 sp	Frozen/Cold Weather
Flint and Steel	2 gp	Frozen/Cold Weather
Gloves	3 sp	Mountainous
Hand Fan	2 gp	Arid/Desert
Hatchet	7 sp	Forest/Plains
Head Wrap	5 sp	Arid/Desert
Pitons	2 sp	Mountainous
Rope	2 gp	Mountainous
Shovel	3 gp	Forest/Plains

RARE & MAGIC ITEMS

Rare items (such as anything that is unique or hard to find) and magic items are almost never found in frontier outposts. In fact, most frontiersmen only seek out or trade for magic items that are of some use to them, and once they have one they rarely are willing to part with an item that possesses both power and a practical use. Unless a magic item is useful on the frontier, the odds of finding it are quite slim. The one exception to this is a magic item that the owner does not know is magical; those weapons and items that produce no visible magical effect sometimes find their way into the hands of frontier merchants and will be sold at far below their normal market value.

ADVENTURE HOOK GOODS

Because of their remote location, frontier outposts are an ideal place to insert rare and unusual items that can serve as adventure hooks into a campaign. Whereas in a city a collector would quickly snap up a unique or obscure item, on the frontier such people are rare indeed, and a trinket may sit unsold for months. Dungeon Masters can place quest items in the inventories of frontier outposts in order to lead the party into a sequential adventure. Of course, most of these items are for sale and are not simply given away, and the price of such an item can vary widely. Despite the fact that the item in question is likely useless to the vendor, if he perceives a great interest by the PCs, he quickly raises the price to as much as he thinks they can afford, knowing that they are likely to pay it. The party would therefore be advised to remain as disinterested as possible in the item when they purchase it, perhaps adding it to the negotiations only as an afterthought, so as to acquire it without having to pay an outrageous fee. Items such as maps, keys, books, preserved creature footprints, and so on can be included in the list of wares at a frontier outpost in order to segue quickly and easily into the next adventure.

Kalro, the Prince of Thieves, has taken Downer to his guildhall, the bustling Copper Arcade. They reunite with the Needleman and Tagget, and the party conspires to unload the Ulolok on the halfling's employer, a surface dwelling copper dragon. The treacherous Aristide and a pack of devils rudely interrput their plan.

BUSTER PASS
ZUGZWANG
HUMAN TRADE ROAD
"BEYOND THE WILD ELVES IS A LAWLESS HUMAN CITY, ZUGZWANG. RIVER PIRATES WILL TAKE YOU FROM THERE INTO THE CANYONS."

Story and art by **Kyle Stanley Hunter.** Lettering by **Sean Glenn.** Downer is ©2005 Kyle Stanley Hunter. A **Super Unicorn** production. **www.superunicorn.com**

THIS IS AN EXCLUSIVE CLUB, YA LOUSY PUNTERS!
HIDE THE ULOLOK, YOU IDIOT!
AAAHHHH!
EEEWWEEE!
KNOCK, KNOCK--
HHRRR! COME IN!
TO BE CONTINUED

RETURN OF THE GAMER (PART 1)

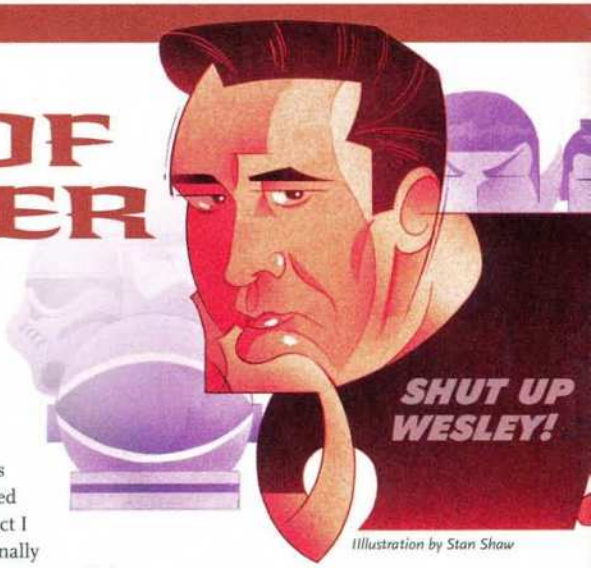


Illustration by Stan Shaw

During the height of *Star Trek's* popularity in the late 80s, I attended conventions almost every weekend. In fact, I've been to so many (the number is in the hundreds), they've mostly blurred together: I would get on a plane sometime on Friday, accompanied by my Gameboy, a Walkman, and my mom. A few hours later, I'd find myself at my destination, and I'd spend the next 48 hours being A *Star Trek* Cast Member—I'd sign autographs, I'd talk about the show, and I'd try to tell jokes and enjoy myself. It wasn't always easy, but it was a good way to promote the show and meet the fans. I earned nominal fees, but it was never anything extravagant (besides, back then, I probably would have done a show for a few painted *Warhammer* armies and a half-pound of dice). Paramount, my agents, and the show's publicity people encouraged me to attend cons, so I did it... week after week after week.

Before long, the fun wore off, and cons became a lot of work. I didn't always look forward to jetting away for the weekend, and occasionally, I even resented it. This was a strange feeling for me, because I'd been attending cons as a fan for years, especially gaming cons. But after *Star Trek* went on the air, I couldn't be That Guy Who's Playing *Car Wars* In Open Gaming anymore. I was Wil Wheaton Who Plays Wesley On *Star Trek* In Open Gaming Who Is Trying To Play *Warhammer* But Is Getting Hassled By The Guy Who Hates Wesley. When I walked into the dealer's room to buy some Space Marines, or replace a d20 that just wasn't rolling correctly, I had to walk past people wearing "Put Wesley In The Airlock!" buttons and "Shut up, Wesley!" T-shirts with my picture on them. Eventually, I just stopped going, and I had to rely on reports from my buddies who continued to attend without me.

Star Trek changed my life in a lot of ways, some good and some bad. It added some opportunities to my career, and prevented some others... but the effect I felt most deeply and personally was the loss of the gaming cons. This may seem like much ado about nothing to some people, but those cons meant a lot to me. It was fun to spend a weekend away from my parents doing nothing but geeking out for three days with people who were even bigger and better geeks than I was. Even as an adult, I missed the pure essence of geekery at those cons, and I've wondered several times in the last few years if I'd ever be able to just sit down and play *Junta* or *Apples to Apples* with random strangers again.

From 2001 until 2004, I appeared at a few *Star Trek* cons as a way to promote my books, my website, and earn a little extra income for my family while I tried to figure out what the secret handshake currently is in the Entertainment Industry, but I never traveled a great distance for a con, and I certainly never thought I'd be able to kick back and actually play games at a con again.

It was with this state of mind that I accepted an invite to speak at Linucon last October: I had a chance to promote my books and my website, but even more importantly, I would get to share the Guest of Honor title with one of my biggest heroes: Steve Jackson, of Steve Jackson Games. For the three DUNGEON readers who don't know who Steve is, you could mention him in the same breath as Gary Gygax, Monte Cook, and James Ernest. When I got an e-mail from Rob Landley, the con chair, asking me if I'd be willing to play Celebrity *Munchkin* with Steve, I didn't have to think twice. Hell, I didn't even have to think once.

Linucon would be a more broadly focused con than the comic cons and *Star Trek* cons I'd attended in the last few years. If you drew a big Venn diagram composed of Gamers, Computer Geeks, and Sci-Fi Fans, the overlapping areas would reveal... well, me, for one... but they'd also reveal the people who attended Linucon in Austin.

The whole flight to Austin, I prepared for my weekend of serious geekery: I watched *The Simpsons*, then *Star Wars* (looking away and coughing loudly when Greedo and Han inexplicably shoot at the same time, of course) on my iBook's DVD player. Then I listened to some Monty Python on my iPod while I read DRAGON and browsed the *SkyMall*. When the plane touched down in Texas, I was one obnoxious snort away from getting my geek on.

My friend Andrew picked me up from the airport, and after a short drive, we were at the hotel. From the moment I walked in, I knew that this con would be different from all the cons I'd attended in recent years. I felt like I was a teenager again, surrounded by like-minded people who loved the same things I did, with a passion and enthusiasm that only geeks can create and understand. I threw my bags into my hotel room, picked up my badge, and ran across the lobby to the gaming room.